

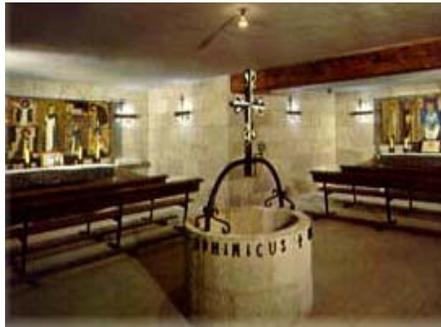
**Report of the Coordinating Council of DSI
to the Fifth General Assembly of DSI
April 30 - May 4, 2007**

WE MAKE THE PATH BY WALKING IT

There is no path - the path is made as we walk. As we walk, we make the path and then when we turn and glance back -- we see the road that never again will be trod.

The experience of the journey from Caleruega in 2004 to Rome in 2007 is captured well in these lines from the poem by the great twentieth century Spanish poet, Antonio Machado. This unchartered path has been exciting and adventuresome while at other times it was arduous and frustrating. There were several roadblocks that altered the course and required detours but, as you can see, as DSI walked, it made the path to Rome.

Let us recall the experience of Caleruega, 2004. Many of you are new to DSI but some of you were present there. How many of you, dear sisters, remember the winding tower, the well, and the pathways there? I am sure that those of us who attended the **Fourth General Assembly of DSI** can recall these images as well as the harmony of our diversity, the strength of our shared Dominican identity, the richness of our multiculturalism and the urgency of our prophecy.



During that meeting, the Prioresses present also selected the leadership of DSI, consisting of the International Co-ordinator, sr. Margaret Ormond, the five continental promoters, sisters Liliana Badaloni, Gemma Doll, Franka Igweilo, Angela Mary Leydon, and Judith Anne O'Sullivan, and entrusted us with four objectives.

After Caleruega, I returned to Rome to **DSI's beautiful office**, the former sacristy of Pius V, at **Santa Sabina**.



Thanks to the welcoming hospitality of fr. Timothy and his council, and fr. Carlos Azpiroz and his Council, Santa Sabina has been home to DSI since its inception. These people and this location are a pure gift, one that we give thanks for daily. Presently there are three Dominican sisters who have office space in Santa Sabina for DSI. The DSI office is the centre of

communication and administration, the place for the archives and data base. **It is also a place of meeting, of fire, of exchange of ideas and blessings.**

DSI is blessed with the presence of **three permanent secretaries – Flavia Angi, Patrizia Morgante, and Bernard Perez –, a translator and a host of collaborators**, mostly at a distance, who mostly “volunteer” their technological, secretarial, translation and financial expertise. (I am sure that there are more than 25 in number!) Without these secretaries, this host of collaborators and your generous support, DSI could not continue to exist and implement our objectives. We want to express our profound appreciation to them for their generous help. We hold in special regard one of our most faithful collaborators, **sr. Barbara Suessmann** of the Amityville Dominicans, who died suddenly in December, 2006. She had contributed her financial expertise, especially in the area of investments, during the past five years,

We*, as Coordinating Council, would like to share with you how we tried to implement four objectives that were entrusted to us in Caleruega.

FIRST OBJECTIVE: THEOLOGICAL FORMATION: DSI continues to animate the theological formation of sisters, especially in initial and on-going formation.

1.1 **BUILDING BRIDGES**, a collection of 37 theological reflections by members of the Dominican Family, was circulated in three languages – Italian, English and Spanish – to all parts of the world. A joint project of the sisters and friars, this book has proved to be an excellent resource for theological reflection. Unfortunately, the French edition, though translated, is yet to be published due to problems with finding a publisher. DSI also witnessed the increased participation of sisters in theological seminars, especially in Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and North America.

1.2 A **Theological Advisory Committee**, made up of a sister-theologian from each part of the world, was convened in February, 2005, to explore the challenges involved in the theological formation of sisters. Those in



attendance were: from Africa - Petronille Kayiba, and from Asia – Zenaída Nacpil, from Europe – Cecily Boulding and Mary O’Driscoll and from North America – Mary Catherine Hilkert. Regrettably, the delegate from Latin America was not able to come at the last minute and her voice and experience were greatly missed. This group drafted a letter that stressed the importance of the theological

vocation as preachers. It was distributed to all the prioresses and published in IDI in April, 2005.

1.2.1 **TRUTH IN LOVE** is another project that DSI is participating with the friars, which is studying the theological formation of friars and sisters. We gratefully acknowledge the work of the Socii of Intellectual Life, Apostolic Life and Latin America and the Caribbean (Marcio Couto, Chrys McVey and Joao Xerri) in this joint theological endeavour to provide dialogue between Dominicans from different theological perspectives.

1.3 Over twenty Dominican sisters provided **mini-courses, retreats and reflections** in such places as Solomon Islands, Peru, Slovakia, Nigeria and the USA. A New Zealand Dominican, Sr. Helen Bergen, wrote a theological reflection for the DSI feast of the Visitation and circulated it throughout the Asia Pacific region.



1.4 How often do we recognize the special needs of our **native, non-international Dominican congregations**? It became apparent during the beginning years of DSI that leaders of "native" or non-international congregations were not given much opportunity to build on their existing leadership skills. DSI began a four-week course for Prioresses and Councillors

from the so-called "English-speaking" Africa, Eastern Europe and Latin America, which consisted in four segments on Spirituality for Mission, Psychological and Financial Matters, and Planning. The teachers were Dominican sisters and friars and the course took place during 2006 in centres run by sisters: in South Africa (March 3-31), in Sweden (July 8-August 4), and in Peru (October 1-25).

* In this text, "we" could refer to the international coordinator, DSI coordinating council, justice and peace promoter, DVI co-ordinator, all in the name of DSI.

We are also collaborating in the Asia Pacific course to be held from August 12 to September 8, 2007. We lament that we have not yet been able to organize this course in Francophone Africa but we will keep trying.

1.4.1 **Formation**, especially for formators and those in all phases of formation, occupies a great deal of our attention and commitment. The "Boxmoor" course, as it has been called, began in 2002 in boxmoor, England and **presently has 45 graduates**, mostly from Africa but including also sisters from Eastern Europe, Asia and the Caribbean. This course moved to Durban, South Africa in February



2007 with 12 participants from Australia, England, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. We are grateful to sr. Bertranda, the Boxmoor community and the Newcastle congregation, and also to sr. Leoncienne, the Bluff Community and the Oakford congregation for this venture. The dedication of all of these people, along with the teachers, is very impressive and inspiring. Sr. Bernadette Tricoit, DSA, a member of the Dominicans from Lille, France and a promoter for West and Central Africa, is exploring ways to provide a formators' course in the francophone Africa. The Asia Pacific region has been hosting its own formators' course for over 20 years and DSI is preparing to co-sponsor the next one there in January, 2008.

DSI encouraged the formators in Latin America to participate in the CIDALC sponsored formators' course in July, 2005. Their positive evaluations prompted us to help to find funding for a follow-up to this course, which will take place in zones and be directed by the participants from this earlier course. We want to acknowledge that these courses could not have happened without the solidarity and support of the sisters and brothers who taught in them and supported them.

SECOND OBJECTIVE: THEOLOGICAL PREACHING: DSI promotes the study and dialogue necessary for preaching and for doing theology in the local context.



2.1 Why do we preach? How do we understand our preaching vocation? What do we preach about? These were the questions raised in the inquiry entitled **"The Dominican Charism of Preaching"**, circulated by the Socii of Apostolic Life and Intellectual life. (Chris McVey and then Giertych Wojciech). A great number of congregations of sisters in the United States responded with enthusiasm. Why did so few sisters from other parts of the world not respond? Was this inquiry not sufficiently known, not deemed that important or viewed as only for the friars?

2.1.1 fr. Carlos Azpiroz invited three sisters -Viviana Ballarin from Italy, Mary Catherine Hilbert from the United States and Petronille Kayiba from the Democratic Republic of Congo and one laywoman, Blanca Gomez from Uruguay- to participate in the **International Preaching Commission** for a four year term. The purpose of this commission is to engage the entire Dominican Family in a dialogue around our common mission of collaborative preaching. We want to recognise the example of many sisters around the world who are taking



opportunities to preach in their local contexts, in both words and deeds. How can we encourage and stimulate more sisters to develop their theological vocation as preachers?

2.2 To celebrate our **800 anniversary as an Order**, there was a meeting of the Master of the Order, fr. Carlos Azpiroz and his council, the international councils of sisters, laity and nuns and the International Commissions of Justice and Peace and volunteers in Prouille, France, April 28-May 4, 2006. At the end of the meeting, this group embraced collaborative preaching and the Millennium Development Goals as vital ways to carry forth Dominic's original dream into our world today. How can we include these two topics in our Chapters, Assemblies, and congregational projects?

2.3 A collaborative project with the friars, **Dominican Volunteers International (DVI)**, focuses on involving committed lay people in our preaching mission.



Sr. Rose Ann Schlitt serves as DVI Co-Director for DSI of this project and brings over 40 years of cross-cultural missionary experience to it. Can we as congregations host lay volunteers? We need to find more sending and receiving communities among sisters' congregations. Since 2004, 15 congregations of sisters have sent or received volunteers and

four more are awaiting the arrival of a volunteer. This is a collaborative project with the friars and there have been difficulties with staffing this significant project. In 2005 only a friar was available to serve and in 2006 only a sister. This lack of availability impacts the collaborative approach to preaching that DVI models.

2.4 Are we aware of **IDYM activities** in our countries and do we encourage our sisters to participate? The future of IDYM belongs to all of us. DSI supports the International Dominican Youth Movement (IDYM) through the presence of our delegate, **sr. Clara Garcia**, on the International Board and through our participation in the IDYM Assemblies.

THIRD OBJECTIVE: DSI promotes a more compassionate world order, with particular attention to the rights of women and children and to the struggle against Aids, in collaboration with other organisations, ecumenical, inter-religious and non-governmental groups.

3.1 One of the main ways in which DSI struggles to achieve this goal is through the selection and support of the **International Co-Promoter of Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation**. This sister, along with the friar co-promoter, co-ordinates the International Commission and supports especially the sister members of this Commission. The

availability of sisters to serve in these capacities in each part of the world is also sometimes lacking. Can Prioresses see these continental responsibilities as part of their Dominican and DSI identity? Sr. Marie Therese Perdriault was the first International Co-Promoter of JP and after four years of dedicated service is passing on this mandate to sr. Toni Harris. Continental promoters held meetings in the United States in July of each year, in Africa in Nigeria, Tanzania and Benin, in Asia Pacific in Taiwan in September 2006, and of zonal promoters in Paraguay, El Salvador and Ecuador. These meetings focused on the plight of women and children with regard to migration, food, water, trafficking, land and poverty. Though many Dominican sisters are involved in work with AIDS, DSI, unfortunately, does not as yet network sufficiently with these sisters.



3.2 **“Remembering the Martyrs: A Challenge for Our Journey”** was the theme of the meeting in El Salvador, December 2005 where representatives from the Confederation of Dominicans in Latin America and the Caribbean (CODALC), Inter-provincial Conference of Dominican



friars in Latin America and the Caribbean (CIDALC), the Dominican Leadership Conference (DLC) and Canada came together. The purpose of this gathering was to share experiences of justice and peace as sisters and brothers from North to South and from South to North, to celebrate our collaboration past and present and to recuperate the memory of our martyrs and allow it to transform us.

Modelling a more compassionate world order by listening to the experiences of our sisters and brothers in the North and South is an invaluable way of showing that another world is possible.

3.3 **“Another World is Possible”** IS the theme of World Social Forum, which took place in Kenya in January, 2007. DSI sent **sr. Toni Harris** to this one and Marie Therese Perdriault to the one in Brazil in 2005. This is in keeping with Dominic’s experience of engaging with popular movements. As one person said, “We wouldn’t exist without the Cathars.” How can we learn from such social movements and interact with them? This meeting is one of the key places where we can connect with civil society, popular movements and non-governmental organisations at the global level.

3.4 **“What is the Earth asking of the Order?”** was the title of an international conference sponsored by DSI from June 9-19, 2006 in Genesis Farm, New Jersey. The participants came from Germany, New Zealand, Philippines, South Africa, Switzerland, Trinidad and the United States and were organized by Amityville sr. Margaret Galiardi. These participants were expected to answer this question back in their home countries. For example, one participant, sr. Ann Braudis, MM gave a day in DSI/Philippines for over 222 sisters who studied this topic together and strategized about ways to be more earth conscious and respectful. How can we better own this perspective because it is integral to Dominic’s focus on the world and vital for our future as a planet and for the poor who are be the first to suffer the ill effects of ecological damage?



3.5 Since justice and peace are both a global and a gospel imperative, DSI has joined with other organisations engaged in these kinds of activities. DSI visited the Franciscan International and **Dominican offices (FIOP) in Geneva** with fr. Philip Le Blanc in Geneva and the DLC/UN office **in New York** with sr. Eileen Gannon and co-facilitated a meeting between these two groups, which resulted in having both representatives sit on the International Commission of Justice and Peace. We have participated in meetings with the **Community of Saint Egidio**



on the death penalty and adoption “at a distance”. And we have collaborated with **CIPAX**, the Inter-Confessional Centre for Peace, in their annual celebrations in memory of Archbishop Romero in Rome, in their conferences with sr. Antonietta Potente, OP, and their publications. DSI has also published articles in the alternative press, such as **Pax Christi Italian magazine**,

Mosaico Di Pace and has co-sponsored with the friars the meetings of the **SALOTTI at Santa Sabina**, where the Roman community explores justice and peace topics together. We also held interviews in collaboration with IDI. DSI also participated in the meetings run **by JPIC, UISG, USG and SEDOS** about global themes.

Conscious of our globalized world, DSI needs to continue to expand its horizons beyond the Dominican world and be more inclusive and attentive to the agendas of other groups.

FOURTH OBJECTIVE: DSI continues to promote the collaboration and communication among congregations and to offer opportunities for fuller collaboration.

4.1 **“How to foster collaboration and communication among Dominican sisters?”** is always the main question on the agenda of the annual meetings of the **DSI Coordinating Council**. We met in Santa Sabina in Rome, 2005, Prouille, France in May, 2006 and Via Casilina in Rome again prior to this Assembly. During these annual meetings, we usually meet with fr. Carlos and his Council. Unfortunately this group lacked continuity and that added greatly to the work of the other members of the Co-ordinating Council, especially the International Co-ordinator. It is vital that those selected at the General Assembly are able to serve the entire term.

4.1.1 Another event vital for communication and collaboration among the



Dominican Family has been the bi-annual meeting of promoters, where possibilities and problems about our Dominican collaboration are discussed. This group, consisting of **various promoters for the Dominican Family**, the nuns, friars, laity, youth, justice and peace, sisters and volunteers here in Santa Sabina, met together in Tours, France in October, 2004, at Tor San Lorenzo, Italy in May, 2005, in

Rome, Italy in October, 2005, in Prouille, France in May, 2006, and in Oslo, Norway, October, 2006. Generally the promoters meet once a year at Santa Sabina and the next time in a place where the Dominican Family is active and there are inexpensive flights. We also meet monthly for sharing, prayer and social. These meetings are always informative and instructive and help to strengthen our bonds as collaborative Dominican preachers.

4.1.2 Thanks to two of the permanent secretaries and our lay translator, DSI began a **quarterly newsletter** and **news brief in four languages** and revised and upgraded the **DSI web site** (www.dsiop.org). We also published two **DSI Directories**, one in 2004 and another in 2006. We welcome any suggestions about these communication efforts and ask that these materials be shared with the members of your own congregations. We also encouraged the study of other languages, especially in Eastern Europe and Africa. Many times during our gatherings, the mother language of sisters present is never



considered during prayers and conversations. How can we be more inclusive and respectful and not always expect others to learn our dominant language?

4.2 Attending the **meetings of continental organisations**, giving talks there and developing links among sisters are crucial to the development of DSI. Over the past three years, we have attended the following continental organisations:

- Africa: DSA in Cameroon, November, 2005 and South Africa in February, 2007,
- Asia: Pakistan in February, 2007, and Australia in August, 2005,
- Europe: DSE in Hungary, April, 2005
- Latin America and Caribbean: Lima, Peru, January, 2007,
- North America: DLC in 2004, 2005, and 2006 and Canada in 2006.



This is costly at times, and demanding, yet it proves to be a vital link. The relationships between DSI and continental organisations are varied, depending on the area. There needs to be more conversation about the relationship between continental organizations and DSI and its international agenda. Holland, India,

Pakistan, Central African Republic, Rwanda, Congo, Brazzaville and Kinshasa, Mozambique and Norway were visited for the first time by DSI. We also met with national groups in Italy, Spain, France, Sweden, Slovakia, Indonesia, Ireland and Colombia.

4.2.1 **“What does it mean to belong to an International Dominican Sisterhood?”**¹³ German-speaking sisters in 2005 from four different congregations sought to answer this question with the International Coordinator during their five day stay in Rome. DSI also enjoys the annual visit of the Parable pilgrimage from the United States.

4.3 Our Iraqi sisters wept and DSI was born! Responding to the cry of our Iraqi sisters during the first Iraqi war was one of the main reasons why DSI began and continues in being. **We decided that we never wanted any Dominican sisters to be alone, especially during times of trouble.** It is integral to our identity as Dominican sisters internationally. We have initiated solidarity projects with our family in Iraq, Palestine and in areas affected by the Tsunami and KATRINA.



4.4 Lastly at Caleruega, 2004, the prioresses asked that the leadership of DSI revise the **statutes** to address emerging realities. After convening a group of consultors, we circulated their suggestions among the membership, listened to their feedback, and revised the draft. This will be presented for final approval at the Fifth General Assembly in May, 2007. Prioresses need to re-read these statutes before the Fifth. General Assembly. They can be found on www.dsiop.org

CHALLENGES: Though DSI delights in its development over these three years, making paths, sometimes that have never before been trod, we cannot ignore the challenges that are ever present. If Dominican Sisters International could achieve all that has been achieved, we will be able to do more if together we face the challenges before us.

PERSONNEL: During these past four years, it has sometimes been difficult for DSI to find the needed personnel. Since the work of the Coordinating Council and of most leaders of continental organizations is not full time and is non-remunerative, these people are often overworked and collaborative ministries take second place. How can we encourage more sisters to participate in continental



organizations and assume responsibility in them? Though our congregational needs are often demanding, we need to find time and place our talents at the service of our international Dominican sisterhood. Searching for candidates to serve as the next International Coordinator has also been a challenge. How can Prioresses assume more responsibility for DSI both at the international and continental levels so that our tradition of democracy can be better lived out?

LANGUAGE LEARNING: It is imperative that all strive to study other



languages for many reasons. During these past three years, Gemma and Margaret studied Spanish and Franka studied French and still we struggle with communication. This is a struggle that needs to be on-going with all of us, if DSI is to witness to its identity as Dominican sisters internationally. Can we share our homes and/or sisters with others who want to study our languages? Finding translators for written materials,

though necessary, is costly. Any volunteers? These in-kind donations are invaluable to our future together.

FINANCES: As in our congregations, finances are an on-going challenge. Presently DSI depends on the following four sources for income:

- DUES: to cover administrative tasks;
- SOLIDARITY FUNDS: to foster collaborative projects in Africa, Asia Pacific, Latin America/Caribbean and Eastern Europe;
- IN KIND SERVICES: to donate time and talent to DSI endeavors.
- GRANTS: to sponsor specific courses, especially in leadership and formation;

Can Prioresses contribute in any of these areas in order to ensure more financial stability and viability? Staffing DSI and its projects is becoming increasingly costly.

COLLABORATION: This is vital for our future together as sisters, as a Dominican Family. It is the only way that DSI can be a prophetic witness of the gospel. Collaboration requires a great deal of patience and time and yet when it works there is no more effective way to witness to the preaching of the gospel in our times. There are excellent examples, too numerous to mention here, of collaboration among Dominican sisters in each part of the world. How can Prioresses learn from these examples, encourage such collaboration within and among congregations AND MAKE THEM PERMANENT?



We are delighted to see you at this Fifth General Assembly around our theme **“Liberating the Fullness of our Preaching, Another World is Possible”**. It will be a time to come together as contemplative preachers to share our joys and sorrows, to embrace our world and ourselves as

the Holy Preaching, to reflect together on the Millennium Development goals, to release the fullness of our preaching, especially among suffering humanity, to elect the leadership of DSI and to set objectives for DSI for next 3 years.

We are grateful for your solidarity over these three years and for the ways you have walked this path with us. Your personal and financial support has been invaluable. As we turn and glance back, we realize that DSI has changed these past years. At first, there was one sister who was part-time, and now there are three sisters fully engaged IN DSI, along with that host of collaborators. And we are walking a new path that has never been trod before. We are collaborating so that the mission of preaching together holds “pride of place” among us and not our own congregations or ministries. And we are doing this without juridical structures. **We rely on your good will and common commitment to take up our preaching mission in a more globalized environment.** We lean on your continued prayers and solidarity and we welcome this opportunity to make the path as

we walk. DSI is especially dependent on your willingness to release sisters to carry on our expanding mission. We are especially mindful of those congregations – past and present - who have freed their sisters to serve as Co-ordinators of DSI and Co-Promoters of DVI and Justice and Peace. There are not enough ways to express our profound gratitude for this generosity.

On a personal note, I am very grateful to my own congregation, to the communities at Villa Rosa, Santa Sabina, DSI's team and staff, past and present, and to my "Roman" sisters, Clara, Dolores and Angeles, for their unconditional support and acceptance. **Without them, I could never have walked on this continually emerging path for the past nine years.** I offer you my sincere gratitude and hope that as we liberate the fullness of our preaching, a better world is possible and forthcoming, both in DSI and in our world, especially among the poor.

Respectfully submitted,

Margaret Ormond for the Coordinating Council of DSI