



# Dominican Sisters International

DSI is a collaborative movement among Dominican Sisters of the apostolic life. In Rome, May 1995 some 80 General Prioresses voted to form Dominican Sisters International (DSI)

Newsletter

July, 2008

## DSI in the World: NEWS



**“That they may be ONE...”** This word of Jesus in the Gospel of John best describes my experience during the Assembly of the Dominican Sisters Africa (DSA) – Kigali – Rwanda May 2008. Although, We came from different ends of the world and Africa, but yet we related to one another as same daughters of St. Dominic, women with same aim, same goal, same objective, that is, the salvation of souls. This I felt was the focus of all these Dominican women gathered in Kigali.

Our stay was peaceful in Rwanda. I experienced a people with strong belief in life against any form of death. This I noticed in the inscription “Genocide ... Never Again!” Finally, I want to use this medium to thank all the DSA Assembly delegates for the confidence they gave to me by electing me the JPIC Coordinator for the Great Continent of Africa, my Prioress General – Mother Vivian Ballarin for her support and for giving me her blessings. My thanks to my Delegate, Sr. Margaret Hussain and to all the sisters of the Nigerian Delegation for assuring me of their support. By the Grace of God and the intercession of Our Lady Seat of Wisdom, I submit myself to the service of the Dominican Order, especially here in Africa.

**Sr. M. Paulina Chioma Ogonnaya, OP**

### General Assembly of the Dominican Sisters of AFRICA (DSA)

#### A meeting of collaboration and peace...

At Kigali, in Rwanda, we saw a sign of hope for the future of the Dominican Family in Africa. True collaboration between sisters who came to meet here in what a pioneer described as: “a paradise hidden in the middle of the African continent”. The person who worked hard and discreetly at our side so that the DSA assembly ran smoothly felt that: “... they had one heart and one soul...”.



Gianna and Paulina

In the daily reunions we advanced towards the proposed aim, realising, step by step, all the stages of the program with a syntonism of feelings.

Even the two Dominican brothers were visibly surprised. One of them said to us when we said our goodbyes on the last evening: “I have experimented hardness, strength and softness”, qualities in our relationships that surprise our brothers. The soul of the meeting was apparent in each dialogue and palpable in the decisions taken heart to heart.

Thank you!!! Again, a thousand “thank you” to Sr. Michael Mdluli who co-ordinated everything with the richness of her beautiful intuitions and her untiring attention to the words of every participant. This was a concrete celebration of the 10th anniversary of the existence of DSA.

**Sr. Gianna Maserà, OP**

### Young Dominican Sisters in EUROPE: Formation course, Hungary, July 2008

Dominican sisters from nine different Congregations and from a total of 15 nationalities! It will be a great group of 67 sisters and one brother. All the sisters are younger than 40.

## ASIA

### Dominican Sisters in Vietnam: Rising from the Shadows of the Past

The Federation of Dominican Sisters of Vietnam is flourishing! Their formation houses are full of young and promising sisters-to-be. Of the six Dominican Congregations in the country, four are in the South and two are in the North. Most of them have young foundations coming out as fresh beginning after years of persecution and war. The Federation is the rich ground for the building of a very unique kind of collaboration and presence among the Dominican sisters. All of the six congregations wear the same kind of habit, use the same Constitution, and attend the same theological formation and program of studies.

More importantly, the sisters, in partnership with their thousands of lay Dominican collaborators, are engaged in various forms of ministries: taking care of human life from womb to tomb, from the unborn and new born babies to the elders who are in the twilight of their life, most of whom are from poor families.

**Sr. Cecille Espenilla, OP**



## ASIA

### Dominican Sisters in Indonesia: Looking forward to their first DSI Assembly

Presently, there are only two Congregations of Dominican Sisters in Indonesia located in separate islands miles apart from each other. Take note that Indonesia is a vast country of more than 17,000 thousand islands, five of which are big enough as a county. We have to travel by plane and train just to be able to visit some of the communities and mission centers of our sisters there and at the same time, be able to explain and discuss with them more about the DSI.

Our sisters are loved by the people they serve, many of whom are not even Christians. Indonesia is home to the largest Muslim community in the world, yet the sisters work happily side by side with their Muslim brothers and sisters. Most of the sisters run basic education schools for elementary and secondary students. They cater to the young, regardless of religious affiliation and economic status. They have put up mission schools in poor areas particularly to serve the financially disadvantaged members of the community. They are also into other forms or expressions of service to the



needy; running an orphanage house, a maternity hospital and a retreat center.

Our sisters in Indonesia can only wish that in the future they will have their first experience of an assembly of Dominican Sisters, because for several years they were the only Dominican congregation in Indonesia until the coming of the Dominican Sisters of Pompeii.

**Sr. Cecille Espenilla, OP**

## EUROPE

### Dominican Meetings of Sisters



In between the DSE, the Dominican Sisters in Europe, there is a long tradition of several sections which are organized according to a proper language. Thus DSE is divided into six sections with own meetings and a responsible sister for the zone who is chosen by the members of the language zone.

In begin of April, the German speaking prioresses who are organized in the "AG OP" (Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Dominikanerinnen) came together for the spring meeting. To the AG OP belong 15 Congregations from Austria, Switzerland and Germany.

The prioresses appreciate the meetings very much. There is an atmosphere of confidence which allows to talk about difficult issues with "colleagues". This time, the difficult and painful question of how to build up the future of (female) Dominican life in the German speaking world was one of the main issues. There are approximately not more than 50 sisters younger than 55 years in all the German speaking Congregations, and that urges reflection about how going on. How can we strengthen these sisters? How could we intensify our collaboration, e.g. concerning the formation? Traditionally in the week after the feast of St. Dominic, there is a meeting for all German speaking sisters, and the AG OP decided to dedicate the meeting in 2009 to this question. What must we do to save (female) Dominican places in the German speaking world?

Some days later, the sisters of "Dominican Sisters in Netherlands", DSN, came together for their spring meeting. In the Netherlands there are six Apostolic Congregations (the smallest one consists of one – the last – sister). The main issue was the question how you can live as a "younger sister" in communities with an average of normally above 83 years, while not really being young. This

#### Meeting of the European language groups

Sr. Sara Böhmer, DSI Coordinator for Europe, is organizing the meeting of the 6 language groups for the European Dominican Sisters, it will be from 27<sup>th</sup> until 30<sup>th</sup> of July 2008 in Eger/Hungary; Sr. Fabiola will also participate.

has consequences for the own spiritual way and life. There is a lot of creativity and networking to support this situation, being trusty to the aged sisters, but also to the own vocation as a Dominican sister.

**Sr. Sara Böhmer, OP**

## NORTH AMERICA



The Third National Convocation of the Federation of Dominican Sisters USA and the Sixth Voices of Hope (Dominican Associates) took place April 24 -27, 2008 in Chicago, Illinois. Over 500 Dominican Sisters and Associates gathered together to "Fire the Vision" of Dominican Life. Our days together were spent in contemplative prayer, getting to one another, and listening to and reflecting upon the presentations of twelve inspirational preachers. Mary Ann Wiesemann-Mills, O.P. (Akron) spoke about "Firing the Vision". Religious life is at a time when we must discover who we are and who we are going to be. We are in a time of grace as we are lead to a new way of being. Attracta Kelly, O.P. (Adrian) and Larry Vuillemin (Associate,

Akron) spoke to us about being contemplative women at this time of religious life. "To take on the issues of today we must do so in a contemplative stance." The other preachers challenged us to be "Fire for the Future" in our preaching, in our ministry, and in the life that we share together. Don Goergen, O.P. presided at the closing liturgy as Mary McNulty, O.P. (Sinsinawa) and Barbara Sharp (Associate, Racine) awakened in us the fire that burns with the vision of Dominic and the passion of Catherine. We left these days together singing the words to the song "Fire the Vision" by Jo Ann Timmerman, O.P. (Sinsinawa) written especially for this convocation.

#### DSI in the World: NEWS

#### Brochure DSI :

#### "Thinking globally and working locally..."

Do you think that all the 26,500 Dominican sisters in the world know about DSI and its goals? And does the rest of the Dominican Family know what DSI does?

We have prepared a coloured brochure that you can print and use in your congregations and communities.

Please write to [dsi@curia.op.org](mailto:dsi@curia.op.org) to ask for the brochure (English, French, Spanish and Italian).

## Preaching Peace by Sr. Joan O'Shanahan, OP

*To make the Dominican charism more relevant in today's world...  
by discovering different forms of preaching..."  
DSI Goal 2007-2010*

Joan is an Irish Dominican sister, who works in Rosario city, Argentina.

She says: "We are a group of eighteen Argentine/Irish sisters who have the privilege of working alongside needy and excluded peoples. Our Province or Region is Argentina/Bolivia."



### Joan, the Peace Education Program: what is it about?

It's about transmitting skills to others to bring about changes in attitudes and behaviors; it's about a new way of living and behaving. There are six essential components to be taught to improve dialogue and communication, to solve conflicts and learn how to mediate and build community. Conflict will always exist but it doesn't have to be a destructive force.

It is a low intensity systematic programme which is bringing about many changes in formal/non-formal education.

Sister Marie Carol Hurley says: "It's as easy to teach peace as it is to teach war....."

### What does the "positive approach to the solving of conflicts" consist of?

It means firstly that the trainers trained should model in a positive way how to solve their own problems when dealing with others.

Old negative approaches like punishments, expulsions, are replaced by more positive methods, listening, dialogue, respect for different perceptions, mediation, discussion, anger management, solving conflicts, being resilient, rational behaviour.

Hopefully students/participants will then model this change of attitude and behaviour in their own life-style when they learn this more positive approach.

### I guess that conflicts in a religious community or work place are normal occurrences? ... In your experience what are the major consequences when the approach to conflict is not the right one?

Conflict is an everyday occurrence where people work, play and live together but it doesn't have to be a destructive force, or cause rows. It is only destructive when there is no resolution of the conflict.

Lack of respect for different opinions, religion, political views, culture, rights, can cause anger, hatred, attacks, resentment, invasions, and outright war.

We have to learn to approach conflict in a constructive way using diplomatic dialogue.

### What did you learn from this experience of promoting the Peace Education programme?

I also felt that as well as demonstrations, marches, prayer vigils, fasts for peace and justice we as Dominicans need to take the lead in promoting systematic programmes to change people's minds and hearts

In a war thirsty world context we introduced one new programme to wage peace as opposed to waging war! We have proved it is changing people's way of thinking and living! knew solving conflict and mediation and facilitation was working in the North of Ireland so I was convinced this was one of the new ways!

### Do you see a link between the micro conflicts and the international conflicts among countries and peoples?

Yes, I definitely see links. Some person decides to wage war because of his/her mind-set and convinces others to do likewise.

Are we educating war minded people or peace and justice people? Who taught the leaders of the world to wage war and who failed to give them the tools to wage peace?

If our Dominican family institutes are not working to go the extra mile and teach/preach justice and peace in to-day's world then we are automatically part of the problems! Let us preach programmes which transmit universal values, lasting attitudes of peace and contribute somewhat to bringing about new attitudes in the world we live in.



Wall – Bethlehem, Palestine

## Dominican Collaboration from South Africa to the USA

*"... to promote intercongregational experiences among Dominican Sisters..."  
DSI Goal 2007-2010*

The **Sisters of Saint Dominic of Blauvelt, New York** have been providing a home in their motherhouse and a college education at Dominican College for the Sisters of Saint Dominic from Montebello, South Africa.

On a bitterly cold day in January 2003, Sr. Valentine and Venentia arrived in the United States from their Dominican Convent in South Africa. The two sisters immediately began their course work at nearby Dominican College. Sister Valentine completed her MSW in May 2007. In order to do this, she received her BS in Social Work from Dominican College and entered the advanced placement program at Fordham University. She returned to Montebello and works at the Vianney Children's Home. At the Vianney Home, children ranging in age from infants to teenagers, are cared for by the sisters. These children are orphans because their parents have died as a result of the AIDS epidemic. Sister Venentia will complete the required work for a doctoral degree in Physical Therapy in May 2009 from Dominican College.

Two more sisters arrived in January 2008 to begin college studies and companion with Sr. Venentia. Sister Ethel and Sister Caritas have recently completed their first semester of study at Dominican College and are presently taking a course in summer session. They are still discerning their degree program.

**Sr. Patricia Simpson, OP**

## Dominican Volunteers International

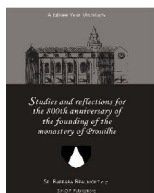
*"To strengthen Dominican Volunteers International..."*  
DSI Goal 2007-2010

DVI is happy to announce publication of **"Primicias: Los voluntarios y voluntarias en la misión dominicana" (First Fruits: Volunteers in the Dominican Mission)** in which 15 Dominican volunteers reflect on their missionary experience with DVI in Latin America and the Caribbean.

They share with us in their own words, the joys, doubts and challenges experienced during the time of their volunteer service. Carlos Gil, Colombian volunteer in Juarez, México writes: "Experience with the brother-migrants and growth in my own life in the midst of this social and transnational reality is shaping me as a person day by day".

This book is published in Spanish by **DVI**, in collaboration with **CIDALC** (Inter-provincial Conference of Dominican Friars in Latin America and Caribbean). To order copies, please contact DVI at [dvi@curia.op.org](mailto:dvi@curia.op.org). A contribution is asked of \$6 US dollars or 5 euros a copy (cost of postage not included). Consult [www.dviop.org](http://www.dviop.org) for other information.

### **"Studies and Reflections for the 800<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Founding of the Monastery of Prouilhe"**



**Sr. Barbara Beaumont, OP**  
S.H.O.P.

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(Sister Historians of the Order of Preachers)

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## DSI Interviews and Stories

### **An Experience: how to transmit and bring Canon Law to life, through teaching.** by Sister Delfina Moral Carvajal, OP

**"We imitate Dominic who did not oppose evil by violence, but through study."**

*"To make the Dominican charism more relevant in today's world by promoting the formation of our identity as women preachers... and by engaging in common study projects."*  
DSI Goal 2007-2010

Dear Delfi, thank you so very much to share with us your experience as a lecturer in a Dominican University.

#### **Who is Sister Delfi?**

Sister Delfi is above all a sister. I was born 38 years ago in Spain, in León, a land that has marked my life, my origins, that I love, and to which I owe much. 18 years ago I entered the Congregation of the Religious of St Dominic, since when, I am, and try to live as a Dominican Missionary. My principal task since October 2007 is to teach in the Angelicum in Rome in the Canon Law Faculty (Rome, [www.angelicum.org](http://www.angelicum.org)). Transmit and bring alive Canon Law through teaching.



#### **What was your first meeting with the Dominican Order like? What struck you the most in the Dominican Family?**

My first encounter was in León, my home town, I studied at the University there and lived in University lodgings run by the sisters of the Congregation to which I now belong. They organised, in their pastoral plan, vocational meetings, to which they regularly invited me and finally I went to one... then I discovered more and more what a true Christian life supposed, the life of Dominican Missionaries and St Dominic; St Dominic captivated me from the start, his humanity, his compassion... Preaching and the permanent research for Truth fascinated me.

#### **The humanity of Dominic captivated you....**

That was what attracted me most to Dominic, his tact, his proximity, his compassion and finally his humanity. The way he looked after his brothers, how he thought about the sisters when he went to visit them, I think that only when one is truly human, can one succeed to be fully divine, and saint Dominic was fully human and, because of that, a saint.

#### **What did you do before arriving in Rome?**

Having finished my studies in Canon Law I returned to my province, and was destined for my hometown, to my diocese and was lucky enough to start work quickly in the diocesan Ecclesiastical Tribunal as a notary. I stayed six years, it was a good experience; I was the only woman working there and I must say they gave me a warm welcome, especially the Justice Vicar with whom I worked closely, he taught me not

only to apply the law but to welcome and "heal" people, a whole school of life; we were at the same time in collaboration with different Religious Congregations, giving courses to monasteries, participating in Chapters, accompanying the revision of Constitutions, on judicial questions...

#### **What was the path of your studies?**

When I entered the Congregation, I thought that at last I was going to stop studying but I was mistaken. I have spent my life studying and I continue to study but I have discovered a new dimension to study. Study as permanent research for Truth, to put study to the service of preaching and as such it is a commitment and a challenge.

#### **What does study signify in your Dominican life?**

Study means great asceticism, many sacrifices but they are worth it. Study has asked of me a transformation of my human heart, it has made me more flexible, more tolerant, more open, it has allowed me to offer a better service to my brothers and sisters.

#### **What makes you happy in your new work at the university?**

Knowing that I am helping people, priests, religious, the laity who come to our faculty, to shed the fear of Law and to help them come to discover, appreciate and valorise the importance of Canon Law in our daily life. To know that to teach is also to preach in the service of the mission, that my teaching is not and cannot be the same as that which is given in a public university, neither is it that of a lay professor nor a Jesuit, that it is not only question of transmitting contents but the formation of spirits, people... to give them a mark.

#### **Would you like to say something to young sisters starting out on their studies?**

Study in itself is difficult, but not if we see it as a service to our brothers. Study cannot be an end in itself, but a way and means that will serve you for the mission, for preaching, a way and means, in the constant research for Truth. On the other hand I would like to insist on the absolute necessity for an adequate intellectual preparation so as to renew effectively our predication. No one is exempt from study in Dominican life, even if certain people consecrate themselves more intensively than others.

Women Preachers and Evangelization of the Poor  
by Sr. Petronille Kayiba, OP

*"To make the Dominican charism more relevant in today's world by promoting the formation of our identity as women preachers... and to collaborate with the International Commission on Preaching..."*

*DSI Goals 2007-2010*

"I am from the Democratic Republic of Congo. I was born there, I grew up there, and I made my first profession in 1976. I belong to the Congregation of the Dominican Missionaries of the Rosary."



In the congregation I was mistress of the novices and after that I entered the Provincial Council as secretary and then I had two mandates as Provincial, and... I needed to stop as I was really tired, exhausted... these tasks were also combined with the work with Justice and Peace of the Order. At the same time I was provincial I was also president of the Union of Religious (f) in the Congo, all that had exhausted me, but I was happy because it opened enormous perspectives, which went beyond tiredness. After the mandate, I found myself still on the Council as vicar but it was more a question of accompanying the new, young provincial. That's about all for that, but being in the congregation, I had chosen to study theology, I would have liked to have continued and written a thesis but the posts I held in the congregation did not allow it. I teach in two institutions one of theology and one of spirituality.

**What do you think the role of the religious woman preacher is in the Order?**

I think that the role of women, as we are discovering today in the world in general as well as in the Church, is important. I think that we cannot build a society, the Church without women, because they are there! God wanted them, God wanted humanity both masculine and feminine, so we cannot make the world and society without women. Dominic's Order is in the interior of that reality, in the world and the Church. It is a community, if I can say that, of disciples, united, that gathers together both men and women. Dominic himself wanted it like this and I think that women have a very important role.

Each Dominican congregation has its way of understanding, perceiving, of living Dominic's charisma which is the charisma of predication. All these Congregations have a vision, they have helped, they help the Order to widen its vision, its

vision of predication. During the reunion, there was something very important for me, thinking about preaching as evangelisation, we insisted on that which is specifically Dominican, the explicit announcement of the Gospel of the Word of God, I think that is what is ours.

I meet congregations in the Congo, we present ourselves, we are asked about our charisma, for example the charisma of my congregation is clearly stated : it is the proclamation of the Gospel to the poor; I meet an Oblate de Marie who says to me: our charisma is the evangelisation of the poor. You find everybody saying: "the evangelisation of the poor", it is very important today to sit down and ask the question: evangelisation? But what is specific, specific to us Dominicans

That is what I wanted to clarify, our specificity! An announcement, an explicit announcement that give reason to our acts, in this sense women, the Congregations, have brought preaching, which remains a word of the Verb, a word announced, I want to say, not in the sense of speculation but rather a word that is announced into being, at the same time a word and an act.

In the framework in which we are reflecting now, I would with all my heart like for us Dominican women to continue to reflect, to help our Order to see clearly this link. The link between our words and our actions. Firstly for ourselves, it is very important to show through our actions that we are Dominican women and not Sisters of Charity or others... all of whom are congregations present in the works of mercy... but we, through these works, there is something more, that certainly we live, but which we should be able to say, to say to the Order, to clarify all the dimensions of our charisma of predication, of evangelisation as an explicit announcement. The dimension of action is very important, the commitment for transformation and it is there where we are, where we are more, us Dominican women.

**You have just taken part in the International Commission for Preaching in the Order, what commentaries, what reactions, what are the challenges that women, women preachers face?**

Yes, first of all, the meeting, as I said, I enjoyed it and I think it was a grace for me to be able to attend. I consider it as one of the important moments of the Order to be able to clarify our charisma, our common charisma that gathers us together, men, women, the laity and the religious,

Dominican Jubilee  
Jubileo Dominicano  
Jubilé Dominicain  
2006-2016

*"... a time to enter into a serious renewal of our life and mission as preachers. (General Chapter of Bogotá #51)*

The Master of Order has created a special Commission for the time between the Dominican Jubilees: 2006-2016. Sr. Fabiola Velazquez, as DSI International Coordinator, was invited to be part of that commission to bring the voice and the contribution of women preachers. The other members represent the other branches of the Family. We are planning the themes for the next 8 years: the idea is to embrace all the aspects of the Dominican charism and spirituality.

**2008** is the time to contemplate the world through the Mysteries of the Holy Rosary. Sr. Fabiola and



Patrizia (the secretary) have visited the Holy Land and the families who make the olivewood rosaries that many of you bought and distributed. We have also visited the students and people who have benefited from the surplus contributions that you have sent. **So we invite you to buy the Rosaries from Palestine to celebrate our Dominican Jubilee in Peace and Justice.**



## CoMmUnIcAtIOn

To strengthen our communication, networking and to encourage sisters to communicate with sisters in another country through e-mail:

**Are there sisters in the congregation who would like to communicate by email with sisters in other countries?**

**If you will send us the names, email addresses and language preferred we will create a list.**

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Dear Sr. Maria Fabiola,  
Thank you very much for your Easter Letter I really enjoyed reading it. I said to myself: "Yes! Saint Catherine is alive in her Sisters. The fire of St. Dominic is burning bright." Your letter had such an impact on me and I read it over and over again. It had such a strong preacher behind it. I really would love to meet you in person.

**Sr. Bernadette Helegwa, OP**

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### And the Preaching continues...

**Immigration** is a critical issue that calls forth the preaching of the Dominican Family throughout North America. Sister Lil Mattinly is involved in the Border Links project in Tucson, Arizona. Border Links seeks to increase understanding of immigration/migration issues. The goal of this group is to sponsor cross border trips several times a year to different parts of Mexico and Central America. For two years, Sr. Lil was part of the team crossing the borders. Now she is the Education Coordinator and is training staff of Border Link.

everyone around the same charisma. I think that now is the moment to clarify how, today, we carry this same charisma in our diversity, the diversity of the members of the Order. The challenge remains, the challenge to clarify all the different aspects. For us women, I think I have already said it, the charisma we live it, but it is a great challenge for me to continue to reflect, to be united, to enter into the momentum, into this reflection, this debate which is opened but with women's words, from our point of view, as how we perceive Dominic's charisma, from what we do as women. I believe that for each feminine Congregation that has been founded, the founder, male or female, had an intuition, from the inside, of the charisma, of what the charisma of preaching is. Perhaps the moment has arrived where we women have to speak out, and take part in the debate. To say for ourselves how we perceive this charisma at the moment when the Order is trying to deepen its own charisma so as to have a strong answer for our world today. I believe that we women are capable! I would love to see the debate taken up by us sisters. ... We sisters...how do we perceive our particular charisma within the great charisma of predication, how, from our acts do we perceive that it is an explicit proclamation?

### **I ask myself how DSI, the movement of apostolic sisters can help?**

I think that it is the responsibility of DSI, of the co-ordination team, to help open this debate, to stimulate the sisters in this reflection. I am convinced that as sisters we have a great deal to bring to this reflection. DSI should look at what strategies could stimulate, motivate the sisters. As sisters we work a lot, I am not afraid to say it, we work hard, we really live Dominic's mercy because we touch human misery through all our works but sometimes we do not take the time to sit down and think, think what we are doing for our specific charisma. The day when the sisters take up this challenge, to know how to sit down and reflect on what we are doing, I think we shall bring a lot of light to the Order, I am sure, I am convinced...

### **One speaks always about preaching, to evangelise the poor but I think that if the poor are to be no longer poor, we should preach to the rich, those in power... What truth can we preach to the rich, to the governments to the elite, what is the word of truth ...? If there is one...**

Yes, I think that the Dominican charisma, is first of all, in itself, a charisma of convocation, we convoke. Principally, we address ourselves to people who have not heard that God is our Father, but there are, inside the Church, people who have got lost, who have forgotten that God is our Father... When we say God is our Father, we are therefore brothers and sisters. We cannot, however live fraternally if there is injustice, that is all the problematic with the rich. They have forgotten that we are all brothers and sisters and there must be a relationship of

justice. But relationships of justice affect the economy! If there are poor it is because someone has accumulated the wealth of the earth, the wealth of the earth that the Father gave to all humanity so that each person should flourish. There are people who have accumulated and leave the others in indigence. The word we preach to the rich must be first of all that: to remind them that God is Father and that we are all brothers and sisters called to live in fraternity in a relationship of justice!

When we speak about the evangelisation of the poor, it does not mean that the Gospel is only addressed to the economically or socially poor; the accent is on that it is true! But we want, need, to enter into the dynamics of Jesus, Jesus situates himself on the side of the poor to turn to the rich and question them, to address his truth to them. The Word of God concerns the human person, and it is from there that I proclaim this word. Jesus takes the side of the poor. When we say the poor, the socially poor or the economically poor we want to say those who are lacking everything, are despoiled of all. Perhaps that gives them a little extra of the right disposition to welcome the Word of God. But there are poor who can be, who are, who can be richer than God, who are so full of themselves and these poor people, when he/she has the possibility to get out of material poverty, is capable of changing sides. He who was oppressed becomes in his turn an oppressor. The question is of openness, a deep openness to accept God, who is God the Father who loves us as his children and convokes us to relations of fraternity, justice and truth and this same word is addressed to the rich. Concerning the rich... the rich are so often caught up in their riches that openness is not easy because they believe that they have everything so as to be able to flourish, their richness, which is fragile of course, so sometimes to open up is difficult. Among the rich there are also poor people and it is there that we should like to lead the one who is rich, the one who is able to open himself up, to hear this convocation to fraternity, to open himself... from there is the exigency of sharing, the attitude of poverty, of humility, to accept that the wealth of the earth is not just for me alone but for the good of all humanity because we are brothers and sisters, children of the same Father. Those are all ways of bringing each person to his/her fulfilment. I have no right to accumulated things for myself alone, it is not a question of seeking my personal happiness but the happiness of all.



**Integrating both psychology and spirituality...  
by Sr. Maria Julia Ardito, OP**

*"To make the Dominican charism more relevant in today's world  
by discovering different forms of preaching..."  
DSI Goals 2007-2010*

She is a Dominican sister, from Argentine, she has lived in Peru for 11 years  
in a community in the Altiplano with the Aymara population.  
She is a psychologist and specialises in sexology:

**"We must allow the Word to flow, new, fecund, and creative; I believe that  
the space of the Word is in the encounter with the other, with the different".**



Photo DSI

**Let us talk about your work...**

In my profession I work in two directions: one is the field of formation and qualification in psychology integrating both psychology and spirituality, or in other words, the integration of the person. It is hard for me to have to distinguish between the psychological and spiritual levels, I think my conception, taken from my experience in accompanying people, is to integrate the person in all his/her dimensions, I could not disassociate them. I am psychologist and preacher, and as Dominican I have the taste and savour for the total integration of the person, predication and accompaniment. I have worked in the accompaniment of men and women in religious life for 20 years: I have given courses to trainers and to those in formation: personal accompaniment in discernment and in the process of personalisation.

**And the second part of your work?**

It is in the field of the formation and qualification in the realm of psychology, sexology and affectivity with laity and many institutions. There has been 20 years of civil war in Peru and it has left victims, above all among the indigenous Quechua, 70% of those who died have been assassinated or abused. The Church in the south Andes is associated to the country's program for the accompaniment of victims whether it be on the level of compensation in justice or reparation on the psychological level.

**What you do is very interesting; I think that violence destroys the person in his/her interiority...**

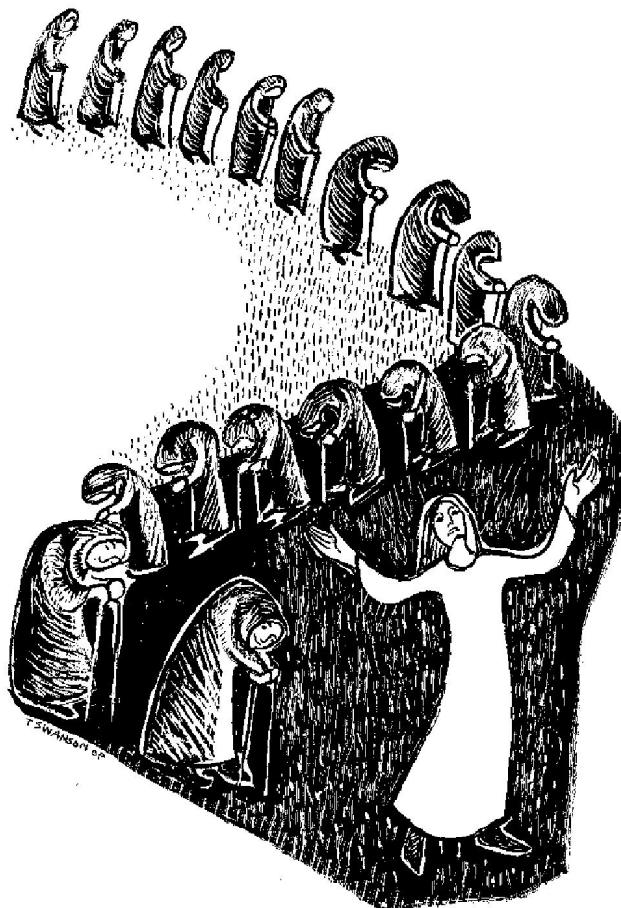
I believe that violence lived out in day to day abuse, be it sexual or politic, is very difficult, especially when one does not see the aggressor and the person does not know from whom he/she must defend him/herself...What does that provoke? It leaves the person who is aggressed without words... Violence comes before dialogue... it does not allow words. A victim who cannot speak, is not to be able to symbolise through words, cannot get through the experience alone.

**How can an accompaniment heal such deep wounds?**

I remember a person who was accompanied for two years in a process of integration as a leader, as animator, to help her finish her studies. We treated all these subjects over two years. At no time did what I am going to tell you now, come up: We are starting in the country a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, this person came up to me and said : "Maria Julia, that is what happened to me!" By hearing in public something similar to what she had experienced, to see others publicly put into words what had happened to them, broke the mechanism she had created to survive and allowed her to say "That happened to me, I am allowed to say it". From the moment she could put it into words, she was able to say: They came and abused me, they took away my father and mother, we lived in uncertainty each day... Because of that, I can say, not only as a Dominican, the riches of working with victims so that they are able to leave the status of victim. There is a part of responsibility towards the victim to get to that point. It is possible to get out of the status of victim by putting things into words. If a person remains in that state of being a victim, it is not only a structural question, which it is, but it was a social rape which continues, it is convenient to a country, in a community, to have victims. I think that it must be a very personal decision to get out of this state.

**Does that signify that the victim has a part of responsibility?**

Sometimes people say "She asked for it" when speaking about a female victim. If she was abused it is because she did something. What I would like to say when I speak about a part of responsibility, is the potentiality of the victim in him/herself, the responsibility to give back to the victim his/her dignity. It is a delicate subject, very stereotyped and with little foundation, it can be a form of manipulation so as to continue the oppression. The responsibility is to give back dignity to the victim, or the right to say " I also have the right to say". If they destroy me, even destroyed, I can still take the decision and get out of this place from the inner me. When I accompany victims, sometimes I feel that women who have been abused,



who are victims of rape, feel guilty, and it is terrible the weight that even society leaves, if something has happened, "What else is there?... I did not scream... I did not fight, time has passed, I, I carry a part of the fault". When she can get out of that state, when she is conscious that if she has not got out of it before, it was not only because of the external conditioning but there was something on a personal level that made her a victim of herself. I think we have to get to that point.

When is a victim truly freed? When he/she discovers that if he/she has lived so long in silence, without taking a decision, it is not only because he/she was not able, had no space, but because, in some way, the state is convenient. When he/she can recognise that, he/she can recognise his/her strength, that it is not the aggressor who had power over me, it was I who was caught by the social, by someone or something stronger than I, by sex, by the other... In exchange when he/she recognises that it happened, because in some way he/she said yes, he/she becomes free. That is to regain one's dignity: you can free yourself even if they are trying to hang you.

### **Maria Julia, can you share one of your personal experiences of injustice?**

I experience it, for myself, in the Church at the moment: Our Bishop abuses us; inside the Church itself we are powerless to render justice. It is clear that I live and feel this violence as community and personally. Especially at the moment on the part of our Church and of those who are in authority in the church. In this sense, to change one's status demands that decisions should be taken... Yes, I feel the violence of the church itself.

I see in religious life many men and women without their own word, that springs from inside themselves. We are making institutions and congregations where men and women do not have the courage to have their own say. How can we speak about spirituality if the person has not their own words, the power to decide for themselves, to define themselves and to give themselves to a community.... everything is integrated and thoroughly so... The way of being, of acting, of being in relation to, to create relationships; that is spirituality, it requires a human quality which is developed in affective relationships, in relationships that integrate the person and persons. We cannot speak about spirituality if we do not speak about the total development of the person: so the process of formation must also be integrated.

We are saved by our relationships: the person who does not risk a relationship, not only in work, but also in friendships, cannot survive, especially a Dominican. We must allow the Word to flow, new, fecund, and creative; I believe that the space of the Word is in the encounter with the other, with the different. What I see in religious life at the moment is like an institutional narcissism, a institutional protectivism, something which encompasses and must watch and

protect very small people in the interior. Our proposition as Dominicans is to break the frontiers of narcissism and open ourselves up to the other, I think that provokes us to be Dominicans : say the word, meet the other in the word. I believe that the experience of mercy can be whole, it is a very affective word, from the entrails, from the deepest level. That is experienced in relationships, in relationships beyond the frontiers of my community, of my own person. That demands taking risks, going out, being permanently on the road. For me that is spirituality.

### **What is intimacy for you a religious?**

It is linked to sexuality... I think it is our challenge. I think we chose a way of living our sexuality, the choice of being celibate.

If I feel that this way of living my sexuality does not make me widen, amplify my capacity to be in relationship with the other, to come out of myself, to create things with others and to go beyond the frontiers of my own little world, of my desires, this is not the sense of the way of living sexuality in the celibate. I think we should choose a way to widens our capacity to love, our capacity to openness and the gift of ourselves, we should feel that the celibate helps me to live in relationship to men and women. Then the celibate has a sense, if it allows me to be freer, more spontaneous, more open, with a greater capacity to go out, to be in relationship and to leave my fears...

Intimacy is to go through all that

signifies living a loving relationship with someone. To live through the frustration after the idealisation, the experience of proximity and distance, the experience of absence. I do not believe that religious life is to avoid these experiences of loving somebody, but to have them, to live them, to go through them. To experience all that is proper to the experience affectivo-sexual, we might understand each other better.

"I see in religious life many men and women without their own word, that springs from inside themselves. We are making institutions and congregations where men and women do not have the courage to have their own say. How can we speak about spirituality if the person has not their own words, the power to decide for themselves, to define themselves and to give themselves to a community.... everything is integrated and thoroughly so..."

The **Dominican Sisters of Houston** are celebrating their 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Year, a collaboration with their Partners in Mission who support and further the ministries of the Dominican Family.

Events of the 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Year have centered around the four pillars of Dominican Life: Prayer, Study, Community and Ministry. Highlights of the year include four series of public events such as EVENSONG for Peace, Justice, and Care of Creation in the newly dedicated Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Houston, a series of talks by Dominican scholars, including Timothy Radcliffe, OP on *What is the Point of Being a Christian?*, liturgical celebrations of the opening and closing of the year, and a Grand Reunion on the Motherhouse Grounds.

**Note for Readers:** you can find the complete version of all the articles in this newsletter on our website, [www.dsiop.org](http://www.dsiop.org)

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