

News from Fanjeaux

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N° 8

EASTERTIDE
2011

St Catherine of Siena hits the headlines again!



St Catherine of Siena—helping people set the world on fire.

It was sweet music to Dominican ears when on the 29th April the Anglican Bishop of London, the Reverend Richard Chartres, began his homily at the royal wedding of Prince William and Catherine Middleton in Westminster Abbey with a quotation from St Catherine of Siena. He also alluded to the fact of it being her feast day.

The bishop quoted what has become well-known as a maxim in the following terms: “If you are what you should be, you will set the world on fire” But according to Sr Suzanne Noffke op, a leading St Catherine scholar: “It’s one of those bits folks love to paraphrase!”

It’s from Letter T368 to Stefano Maconi, and the authentic version is:

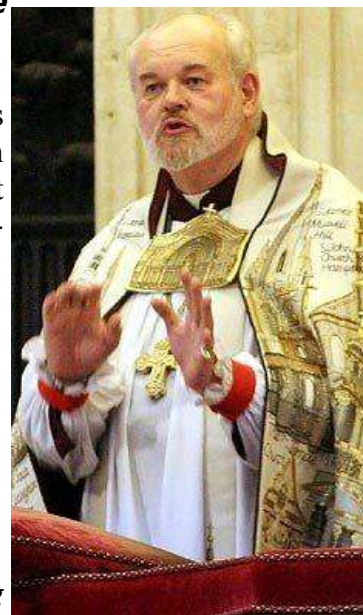
If you are what you ought to be, you will light a fire not only there but in all of Italy.

(Se sarete quello che dovete essere, metterete fuoco in tutta Italia, non tanto costi.)

But in any case, it would seem highly appropriate to offer this advice from St Catherine to this young couple who are so much in the eye of the world’s media, and who will be so conscious of what their rank and role will demand of them in the course of their future-married life together.



The Bishop of London preaching



STUDY THE HISTORY OF DOMINICAN WOMEN
FOLLOW THE S.H.O.P. DISTANCE LEARNING COURSE

SPIRITUALITY AND TOURISM

It is a reality of every day life in Fanjeaux, especially in the summer months but increasingly throughout the year as well, that people who come to visit the medieval village as tourists and not as Dominican pilgrims, discover into the bargain, so to speak, who St Dominic was and why he was around here in the 13th century. By the same token, Dominican visitors are able to benefit from the infrastructure put in place for tourists. We reproduce here an article by the young woman who runs the tourist office at Fanjeaux. It is interesting to see how a non-Dominican employee of the local municipality presents the issues involved. This text appeared in the May 2011 issue of *Eglise en Pays d'Aude*, the official journal of the diocese of Carcassonne, and would seem to be pointing to a lessening of the centuries old antagonism between so-called Cathar interests and Dominican interests in this area. It hints rather at a realisation that collaboration is in everybody's interest. As a member of the local clergy was heard to remark "After all, St Dominic brings in more than the sunflower harvest these days!"

Spiritual Tourism in Fanjeaux **by Céline Pauly**

The spring tourist season has begun in the Aude department and already in Fanjeaux, a medieval hilltop village of the Lauragais district, many visitors are to be seen, eagerly discovering its charms as featured in all of the tourist guides. They come to collect information from the tourist office which I have managed since 2008, when it was set up by the local authority for the Piège and Lauragais districts.

Visitors flock here every year in order to discover the cultural and religious heritage bequeathed to us by the Dominican communities who indeed are still present and involved. This former powerful bastion of Catharism was where St Dominic settled in 1206-7 to preach against Catharism in this area. So Fanjeaux has always had this double dimension of tourism that is both cultural and religious. From the beginning it was evident that the designation as "a city of Cathar country" was going to have to be developed in collaboration and partnership between the administrative and technical entities and the religious institutions.



The label « Cathar Country » is widely used to promote tourism in Languedoc.

In Fanjeaux, whatever the project, we are of necessity involved with the Dominican communities. We have set up a working group which meets regularly to improve the way we receive visitors, whether in groups or individually. There is a very good understanding between us because we are aiming at a form of tourism that is respectful of all and appreciates the spiritual dimension of the site. It is all a question of balance between the touristic aims of the Tourism office and the concerns of the communities which are above all spiritual.



< The coat of arms of Fanjeaux

From the point of view of tourism, our strength resides in the fact that this is a living village: these days many abbeys and convents are visited only as cultural monuments, whereas here in Fanjeaux, without proselytising, we are proud of the fact that people coming to visit this site where fervent communities have been living for the last 800 years! This sense of "having a living soul" impresses the visitors and marks it off from other locations.

Whatever the project—arranging visits for groups, the pilgrim route to Santiago de Compostella, producing literature for tourists, creating routes for hikers—the keyword is "consultation". Even if we still have a long way to go, the project is shaping up and will no doubt arrive at a positive outcome!



*< A hiker sees Fanjeaux on the horizon
from the path of
St Dominic*

Photo credits: Veronica Rosier op, Queen of Peace Monastery , nr Vancouver

*Pilgrims from Australia wait to visit the house of St
Dominic in Fanjeaux >*



News of the S.H.O.P. History Course

New students are continuing to enrol for the S.H.O.P. Association distance learning courses on Dominican history; in fact you can sign up at any time as each student works at his or her own pace. A number who did Module I in 2010 are continuing their studies with Module II now. It has been particularly good to welcome on board in 2011 a number of students from Africa, from South Africa and Kenya where a group of Dominican nuns at Karen, Nairobi have enrolled.

Hopefully two new Modules will be on offer before the end of 2011. One on the beginnings of Dominican life for women in Central and South America—this is an ambitious project involving transatlantic and translingual collaboration, so progress is not always as rapid as one might hope. At this stage there is planned input from Dominican sisters in Mexico, Peru and Argentina.

The second new module planned will be devoted to—yes, you've guessed—St Catherine of Siena, concentrating especially on her as an innovator in Dominican life for women. The amazing thing is that she was summoned to a General Chapter of the Order and questioned about her way of life—but not censured, rather protected so that she might live out her charism to the full. Sometimes it seems that past centuries might have been more enlightened than the present!



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All donations are most gratefully received — they go towards acquiring new books for the library devoted to the history of Dominican women.

For donations and subscriptions :
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contact us for details.

The Association of Sister Historians of the Order of Preachers is defined in its statutes as: “a resource for documentation, communication and formation at the service of Dominican women, religious and lay, through the study of their histories.”

Book News

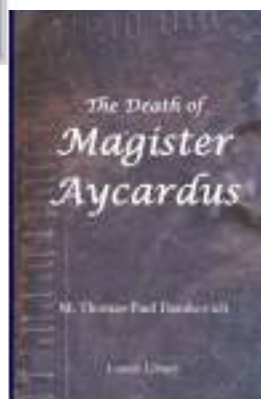
The Death of Magister Aycardus

M. Thomas-Paul Demkovich

Gottfried Reisner is charged by the legendary Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa to discover the truth about a death which happened long ago. It was the death, some say murder, of one of the greatest preachers, teachers and mystics of the time. How could so famous a Friar Preacher die and there be no record? A death, kept hidden by time and an oath of secrecy, that now needed to be disclosed. How did he die? Where was he buried? These are the questions Gottfried faces as he unravels the political intrigue and social struggles at play in the death of Master Eckhart. At the dawn of the Renaissance this adventurer must find his clues amid the shards of a waning Medieval Christendom. The Avignon papacy and Holy Roman emperor, the growing wealth of the merchants and the dwindling power of the nobles, these are all factors in the tragic mystery that Gottfried must solve. At the same time he discovers divine consolation, in the midst of suffering he learns the lesson of life.



M. Thomas-Paul Demkovich, is a Dominican Friar who has written on Meister Eckhart in journals and books. In *The Death of Magister Aycardus* he captures the history of the period and the reader's imagination to create interest and suspense. He is the author of *Introducing Meister Eckhart* (Ligouri, 2006) and *A Soul-Centered Life* (Liturgical Press, 2010).



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