



NEWS FROM THE CDN!!



Fall 2007

Collaborative Dominican Novitiate
4928 Washington Blvd.
St. Louis, MO 63108

Holá from the CDN!

Dear Sisters, Brothers, Families, and Friends:

As the Spirit blows where it wills and works in different ways, similarly four women from different walks of life were brought to the Collaborative Dominican Novitiate (CDN) to begin their canonical year.

On August 16th, in the sweltering heat of St. Louis, four women off loaded their numerous, but necessary, suitcases and boxes. They entered the doors of 4928 Washington Blvd. to continue their adventure into religious life.

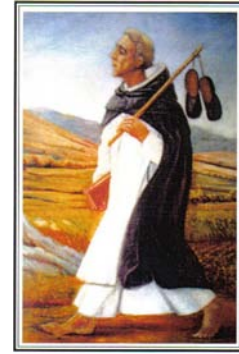
To add to the adventure, the CDN is celebrating its twentieth anniversary and for the first time there are two novices from Trinidad and Tobago, a beautiful and cosmopolitan island in the Caribbean.



The four novices represent two congregations- Sinsinawa and Springfield. The three women from Sinsinawa are Sisters Christine, Lystra and Priscilla. Sister Melissa represents the Springfield congregation. The group is completed with two directors- Sister Pat Hanvey from Amityville and Sister Katie McGrail from Adrian. They are presently serving their third term as directors.

This year's novices come from different backgrounds and have attested to the love and support of their families, sisters, and friends while journeying thus far and into the future. There is never a dull moment in the life of a novice at the CDN!

The Holy Spirit is truly present and active!



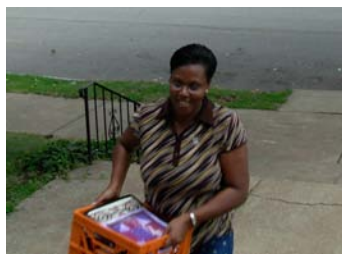
Sisters Christine, Melissa, Priscilla, and Lystra



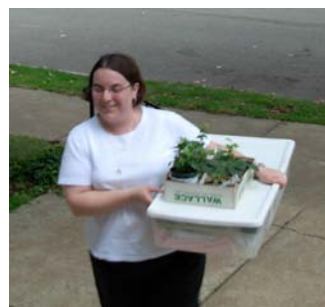
Move in day! August 16, 2007



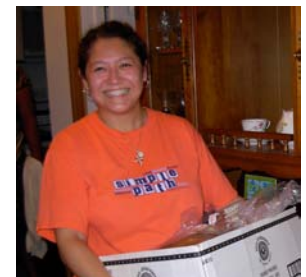
Christine Walcott



Lystra Long



Melissa Blankestyn



Priscilla Torres

CDN OPENING RITUAL



Lystra mixes soil from Sinsinawa



Melissa plants ivy



Christine, Priscilla, and Lystra plant ivy



Pat and Katie plant ivy



Theodora and Mary Ann water the ivy

There was a hushed silence. A silence which anticipated the official beginning of our journey as the entrance hymn *Pilgrim Women* by Denise Pyles, alluded to that fact. Four novices, two co-directors and two Congregation Formation Representatives, Sister Theodora Stremlau (Springfield) and Sister Mary Ann Nelson (Sinsinawa), were all assembled in the chapel for the prayerful ritual.

As we prayed, *Teach Me Your Ways* by . . . , one could not help but reflect on a few phrases at the beginning of each stanza:

Teach me your ways, Lord

That I may open to the same Spirit . . . and of the unfathomable mystery of amazing grace in which I am kept.

That I may praise you,

That I may accept my own talent openly . . . and give it freely

That I may love the kindness of the prophets

That I may be swept up in worship with the saints, which surges in wonder and gratitude, obedience and shapes my life into an irrepressible YES to you.

The Reading from Wisdom 9:9-11 was appropriate for the occasion and would appear to be somewhat providential. ***“Grant me (us) Wisdom . . . with you is Wisdom . . . O send her forth from holy heavens . . . For she knows and understands all things, she will guide me (us) wisely in all my (our) endeavors and protect me (us) with her power.”***

As we continue to give our Fiat, our “irrepressible YES,” we recognize that God’s wisdom is much needed and very apt for the mixing and mingling of the soils from our motherhouses, Sinsinawa and Springfield, and the planting and watering of the ivy plants that followed. This gesture seemed to reflect the reality of our connectedness through Sr. Rachel Conway, who was one of the four cornerstones of Sinsinawa and later became one of the foundresses of the Springfield congregation.

Another significant aspect of the ritual was the blessing and handing over of the keys. This signified a deep sense of trust, openness and willingness to extend the hospitality of the novitiate by way of entrusting the responsibility of the home to us. The blessing of the Novices, followed by the gift of peace concluded the formal ritual.

Continued on next page...



Blessing Melissa...



Blessing Priscilla, Christine, and Lystra...



Katie and Pat blessing the keys...

Continued from previous page...

The final hymn, *The Summons* by Kelvin Grove, was sung reflecting our call and response to become itinerant preachers. The beginning of each of the four verses posed questions which began *Will you come and follow me....?* To which we would endorse the response that was given in the final verse of the song, “*Lord your summons echoes true, when you but call my name. Let me turn and follow you and never be the same. In your company I’ll go where your love and footsteps show. Thus I’ll move and live and grow in you and you in me.*”

We pray that our Trinitarian God, Creator, Christ, and Spirit, will continue to propel us forth on our journey.



At the end of the ritual...



Bricks representing the Sinsinawa and Springfield congregations will be added to Adrian and Amityville bricks on the windowsill in the chapel.



Our plant to nurture during this year together.



back, l. to r.- Christine, Theodora,
Lystra, Mary Ann
front, l. to r.- Melissa, Priscilla



back, l. to r.- Christine, Katie, Pat
middle, l. to r.- Melissa, Priscilla
front- Lystra

Meet the Novices!!



Sister Melissa Blankestyn is a first year novice from the Dominican Sisters of Springfield, Illinois. Born and raised in Bourbonnais, Illinois, Melissa, a clarinetist, earned a Bachelor's Degree in Music Education from the University of Illinois and a Master's Degree in Music

Education from VanderCook College of Music in Chicago, Illinois. Prior to entering, she was the Orchestra Director and Assistant Band Director at Bradley-Bourbonnais Community High School and the director of the adult choir at her home parish, St. Joseph's Church, both in Bradley, Illinois.

On Pentecost Sunday in 2004, Melissa experienced a powerful realization that God was calling her to religious life. Melissa has known the Springfield Dominicans since pre-school, when she was a student in a day care center the Dominicans administered in Bourbonnais, Illinois. Later, she worked with the sisters at the same day care and in her parish. Melissa has described her entrance into the congregation as being home. Her goal this canonical year is to continue to deepen her awareness of God's unconditional love in her life and be attentive to the presence of the Holy Spirit on this journey.



Sister Lystra Long is a second year novice from the Dominican Sisters of Sinsinawa, Wisconsin. A native of Trinidad and Tobago, Lystra first came into contact with the Dominicans of Sinsinawa by responding to an advertisement for a women's retreat in the local

Catholic newspaper. Through the Holy Spirit she felt called to attend the retreat and was impressed with what was shared on Dominican life and about the joyful and diverse sisters from Sinsinawa. Lystra has a B.A. degree in Theology and was previously employed as a Library Assistant at the Regional Seminary Library in Trinidad. She has worked in youth ministry and as a confirmation teacher. Lystra's hobbies are reading, dancing, movies and sports. A few of her goals this canonical year are to deepen her relationship with God, integration of study and to be life-giving in community.



Sister Priscilla R. Torres is a first year novice from the Dominican Sisters of Sinsinawa, Wisconsin. Priscilla was born and raised in Big Spring, Texas. She earned a B.A. in Psychology from Southwest Texas State University in San Marcos, Texas. Prior to entering, Priscilla

worked 10 years for the State of Texas under the Texas Workforce Commission. During this time, she worked in three areas; a local Workforce Office, Communities in Schools of Texas and The Workforce Information System of Texas (TWIST). Priscilla was a member of St. Albert the Great Catholic Church in the Austin, Texas, Diocese. She served as an adult volunteer for the High School youth group. Priscilla came to know the Dominican Sisters of Sinsinawa through a vocation retreat in San Antonio, Texas. She was impressed by their gift of joy and their individuality. She was also impressed with their oneness as a community of holy and faithful women. During this canonical year she is interested in deepening her relationship with God.



Sister Christine E. Walcott is a first year novice from the Dominican Sisters of Sinsinawa, Wisconsin. Christine is Trinidadian born, the mother of two adult children, Kurt and Kamille, and has five grand-children. She

worked for twenty-one years as an elementary teacher at a private school. She also worked as a volunteer remedial teacher at a correctional institute for teenage girls in Trinidad. Christine obtained a Certificate in Religion and in her desire to become a lay missionary, began to pursue the degree in Theology which she has almost completed. Christine is a certified Lay Minister and has been involved in various parish ministries: catechesis, children's liturgy, youth ministry, parish youth coordinator, choir (guitar accompaniment), lector and training of lectors. She has preached not only in Trinidad but in a few other Caribbean islands and also at the Congregation's Chapter in Chicago in 2006. Christine first met a Sinsinawa Dominican Sister in 1976 and in 2003 was invited by that same sister to join. After one year of deliberation she responded affirmatively to the invitation and entered the House of Discernment in January 2004. Christine's goal for this canonical year is to deepen her spirituality and also to integrate the fruits of her contemplation within the areas of community, study, ministry, and human development.

Inter Community Novitiate

This year's Inter Community Novitiate (ICN) is composed of a wonderful, diverse group of women and men from around the world. The fourteen novices represent five communities- Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, Sisters of the Good Shepherd, Contemplatives of the Good Shepherd, Dominican Sisters of Sinsinawa, and Dominican Sister of Springfield- and six different countries- Canada, Germany, Mexico, Trinidad and Tobago, Zambia and the United States.



back row, l. to r.- Br. Juan Gaspar, Br. Tony Nkhoma, Br. Wilfred Mvula, Br. Daniel Janulewicz, Br. Gabriel Sobrevilla Alvarado, Br. Bernard Suzah, Sr. Christine Walcott
middle row, l. to r.- Sr. Melissa Blankestyn, Sr. Priscilla Torres, Sr. Theresa Gaffney
front row, l. to r.- Sr. Anna Maria Steinkamp, Sr. Lystra Long, Br. Paul Chinyemba, Br. David MacPhee

The ICN program provides us with opportunities to participate in a variety of informational classes and workshops. The topics help with discernment and preparation for vowed life. Remarkable guest speakers have presented topics on transition, psycho-spiritual development, centering prayer, eco-spirituality, and preaching. The program has also given the novices the opportunity to share prayer and learn about the charism and founders of each community.

The weekly ICN gathering has allowed us to get to know each other on a personal level and to create friendships. It is a life-giving experience. From the beginning, we have shared a common commitment to being open to the time shared together, to forming community, relationships, and deepening our relationship with God. We are thankful and joyful to be walking the journey together. We feel blessed in our diversity and to have the opportunity to grow in our faith together. Our ICN group is a faith-spirited group of women and men committed to their call to religious life. We look forward to continuing our exploration of religious life through the ICN program.

Celebrating Br. Ben's Birthday...



Wilfred, Paul, and Tony

Preparing for mass...










Juan, Elizabeth Ann, Melissa, and David

Preparing for mass...



Dan, David, and Sister Katie Pierce, IHM

A Week in the Life of a Novice

<u>Sunday</u>	<u>Monday</u>	<u>Tuesday</u>	<u>Wednesday</u>	<u>Thursday</u>	<u>Friday</u>	<u>Saturday</u>
						

While our primary focus this year is prayer/contemplation and community, there are elements of all four pillars of Dominican life, prayer, study, common life, and ministry, within our schedule. Here is a taste of our week at the CDN:

PRAYER

We gather for morning and evening prayers which are taken primarily from Dominican Praise. We each take turns leading prayer, drawing from our diversity, which provides a wealth of different prayer experiences. Centering prayer, as well as Lectio Divina have been a regular part of our prayer experience. On Monday mornings, one of our Dominican friars presides at mass here in our chapel, which begins our day of reflection each week. We join our Dominican brothers at the priory for morning prayer and mass each Wednesday.

Reflection days are a treasured part of our week. They allow us space to be with our God in whatever way we need/choose. Each reflection is prepared by one of us and one Monday a month is a desert day with no specified reflection. We have prayed and reflected with topics like transition, autumn, the Rosary, be-ing, and being an instrument of God.

STUDY

There are several opportunities for study during our week, beginning with Dominican Life Seminar on Tuesday mornings. We are currently reading and sharing *The New Wine of Dominican Spirituality* by Paul Murray, OP. We have been blessed with visits from Sr. Amy McFrederick, OP (Great Bend) to work with psalm tones for Dominican Praise and learn new music and Sr. Toni Harris, OP (Sinsinawa) who shared her work as International Co-Promoter of Peace and Justice. Two more Dominican Connections, in which the ICN group also participated, were a workshop on the Psalms with Sr. Maribeth Howell, OP (Adrian) and a preaching workshop with Sr. Joan Delaplane, OP (Adrian). (*Please see photos in Dominican Connections section.*)

Tuesday afternoons our study brings us to Aquinas Institute of Theology where we are taking “Vowed Life in Religious Community” taught by Sr. Patricia Walter, OP (Adrian). Our Wednesday gatherings of the Inter-Community Novitiate provide additional opportunities for reflection and study. Finally, Thursday mornings we study the History of Religious Life in the United States taught by Sr. Regina Seigfried, ASC.

MINISTRY

Several hours a week we are involved in ministry. Melissa is ministering at the Mary Ryder Home which is an assisted living facility that serves seniors in need, primarily women. She spends time visiting with the women and providing accompaniment for the choir with her clarinet. Lystra and Priscilla are involved with Let’s Start, which includes traveling to the Clayton County jail one day a week to attend a group meeting for women who are currently incarcerated and also a Tuesday evening group meeting at St. Vincent DePaul church for women who are in need of support. Christine’s ministry takes her to Kids for Peace Daycare Center, where she cares for children ranging in age from infant to toddler.

COMMUNITY

Each day that passes brings us to new levels of building community with and for one another. Monthly, we are visited by Sr. Jean Meier, CSJ, who works with us on communication and community building skills. We share responsibilities around the house, rotating cooking and house duties. We definitely enjoy celebrations and have celebrated Trinidad and Tobago’s Independence and Republic Days, Mexican Independence Day, and birthdays. We enjoy our time building our extended community as well when we come together each week at ICN.



Dominican Connections



On September 21, 2007, the Sinsinawa House of Discernment in Trinidad celebrated their 5th Anniversary. We sent the cheerful greeting above!



The Dominican Alliance met in St. Louis from October 26-28, 2007 which also marked the 10th Anniversary of the Alliance. We were glad to participate and also to get to spend some time with Natalee Reese, a candidate with the Dominican Sisters of Grand Rapids.



In September, we were visited by members of the CDN Board of Directors.

Back row- Amy McFrederick (Great Bend), Sue Pixley (San Raphael), Melissa, Priscilla, Pat, Katie
Front row- Maryann McMahon (Racine), Christine, Lystra, Mary Donnelly (Grand Rapids)



Learning psalm tones with Amy McFrederick (Great Bend)



Sharing music with Sister Amy



Back row- Melissa, Christine, Priscilla
Front row- Lystra, Toni Harris (Sinsinawa)



Father Michael Monshau pauses for a picture after a Monday morning mass.



After the Alliance meeting we were visited by the Cluster Transition Team. From left to right- Rene Weeks (Great Bend), Bernie Baltrinic (Akron), Julianna D'Amato (Columbus), Anne Kilbride (Columbus), Therese Leckert (St. Mary's), Rubi Cribbins (facilitator), Gene Poore (Oxford), Barbara Rapp (Kentucky), not pictured Suzanne Brauer (Eucharistic Missionaries)



Preaching Workshop with Joan Delaplane (Adrian)

Some of our favorite photos...



First day of school...



Labor Day gathering with Good Shepherd sisters
Left to right- Srs. Tony, Priscilla, Christine, Theresa, Melissa, Lystra



Enjoying the hot air balloon race, sponsored by....Energizer!



Our first cookout!



Getting ready to cruise the Mississippi!

A hard day's work in the garden...



One September day we spent lovingly tending the yard... planting our first mum, weeding, mowing...



We offer prayers of thanksgiving for all who so generously, lovingly, and prayerfully support us as we continue on our journey in Dominican formation. May our good and gracious God bless you abundantly!!

See you in the Spring!!!

