



Collaborative Dominican Novitiate

2011-2012

The Collaborative Dominican Novitiate (CDN) is a joint effort by the women in the Dominican Order to provide its members in initial formation with an experience of the larger Dominican Family. To date, there are 17 Dominican congregations participating in the venture.

The CDN experience lasts for a span of 10 months, beginning in August until the end of June. Each year a new group of novices comes together to create its own unique experience of community with fresh spirit, abundant gifts, and eagerness to grow in the Dominican tradition.

The purpose of the canonical year in the CDN is to provide a quality experience of Dominican community life, prayer, study, ministry, exposure to and practice of preaching skills, and personal growth for the novices of the member groups. The process of this collaborative experience is intended to:

- *offer a rich novitiate experience*
- *encourage a supportive peer group*
- *share the giftedness and resources of the congregations involved*



MEET THE NOVICES



Krissie Koll is a first-year novice with the Dominicans of Sinsinawa. She has three younger brothers and has spent most of her life in the Chicago metropolitan area. She earned a BA in Pastoral Ministry/Youth Ministry from Dominican University in River Forest, IL, which is where she met the Sinsinawa community. She has been involved in youth and young adult ministry for many years both as a volunteer and professional staff. She says the youth keep her honest and accountable, and that it is a great honor to accompany them on their journeys through life.

After graduating from DU, Krissie spent a year as a Dominican Volunteer in Spokane, WA where she lived with Dominican women from Sinsinawa and Adrian, and ministered at a day care for homeless children. She then moved back to the mid-west and directed youth retreats for two years at a retreat center west of Chicago. Missing the consistent and on-going connection she could have with youth in a parish setting, she became Youth Minister at a parish in Fontana, WI. During her four years there she became a Lay Associate with Sinsinawa and joined Sisters and Associates in prayer and study on a regular basis. Krissie felt called to a deeper relationship with these women and more seriously discerned entering the Congregation. Krissie then took a job as Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries at a larger parish in Hartland, WI. She continued her discernment and was welcomed as a Candidate on August 7, 2010. From there she moved to Whitefish Bay, WI to live in community with eleven other sisters and to continue her ministry in the parish with the youth and young adults. Krissie was received as a Novice on August 7, 2011 which brought her to St. Louis to study, minister and become grounded in Dominican Spirituality and Life. She hopes the year is filled with blessings and fun times between the classes, workshops and reflection days. She says she is ready for this year and is looking forward to it.



Christine (Chris) De Anna is a second year novice with the Dominican Sisters of Sparkill. She was born in Windsor, Ontario, Canada, and entered the United States in 1986 as a freshman at St. Louis University. Chris has a passion for learning and caring for the sick and dying. She has an undergraduate degree in both social work and nursing from St. Louis University (SLU) and Chamberlain College of Nursing, respectively. In 1999, she returned to SLU to complete her Master in Social Work, and in 2008, she went on to complete her Master degree in Public Health on-line from Benedictine University. During her first year as a novice, Chris' ministry was working as a registered nurse for a major health care institution, visiting patients in their homes on the north side of St. Louis.

Chris met the Dominican Sisters of Sparkill in 1995, when she became a parishioner of Epiphany of Our Lord parish. Her journey of discernment has been a growth experience and one she describes as continuing to build upon the foundation she received as a child from her family. She says the women who have answered God's call to live as Dominican Sisters of Sparkill are compassionate, faith-filled women, who bring a humanness to living in community, both with whom they live and those they serve through ministry. Chris' professional experience, both as a nurse and a social worker, finds her called to serve those most in need and at greatest health care risk. Living in community, learning what it means to give of oneself joyfully, generously and through faith, she continues to grow in awareness that her heart is being filled and her journey is being supported and strengthened by women who have answered the call to follow God through the examples of St. Dominic and St. Catherine of Siena.



Kelly Biddle is a novice with the Dominican Sisters of Houston, Texas, Congregation of the Sacred Heart. She is a native Texan from the small town of Bridge City, Texas (which is right on the border with Louisiana and the Gulf of Mexico), where her parents and most of her family still live. She has two younger brothers, both of whom are married and living in the Houston area.

Kelly has been in discernment of her religious vocation for the last approximately five years, and for the last year and a half has been in formal formation with the Dominican Sisters of Houston. In that same time, she graduated from Texas A&M University with a Ph. D. in plant genetics, worked designing educational computer games at Rice University, spent a year as a Dominican Volunteer in Columbus, Ohio, with the Dominican Sisters of Peace working at Shepherd's Corner Organic Farm and the Dominican Learning Center (GED and ESL adult education), and, more recently, taught introductory biology and genetics at San Jacinto College in Houston. It may have taken a long time to figure out where God was leading her, but she did not sit still during the discussion!

Kelly comes to St. Louis hoping to deepen her relationship with God and prepare a strong foundation to support the many years of religious life she sees ahead of her. It is a chance to fully immerse herself in the Dominican ideals of community, prayer, and study (even if the idea of theology classes gives this hard sciences major some apprehension!) She is grateful to her community for making this year of discernment, self-reflection, and preparation possible, and for all of their prayers and support during her time here.

MEET THE DIRECTORS



Megan McElroy, OP is a Dominican Sister of the Grand Rapids congregation and has been in community for 23 years. Megan first met the Dominican Family at Aquinas College in Grand Rapids in the early 1980's. She shares how the witness and joy of the sisters and friars (from the Central Province) are what drew her to community, and she has not regretted one day of it! After spending her novitiate at the CDN (1989-1990), Megan served in parish pastoral ministry in two dioceses in Michigan for thirteen years; and then after earning her MDiv at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, she unexpectedly found herself teaching high school theology at one of the RSCJ schools in Chicago for four years. Just like preaching, it wasn't a ministry Megan went looking for, but she did come to enjoy it and continue to appreciate the lessons it taught her. Megan began as co-director at the CDN in 2010 and continues to thank God for the opportunity to serve in this ministry. To share Dominican life with our newer members is exciting and challenging, grace and blessing. In addition to her responsibilities at the CDN this year, Megan is also team teaching the Foundations of Preaching course at Aquinas Institute with Vincentian Fr. Dan Harris.



Joye Gros, OP is a Dominican Sister of Peace. She was born in Memphis, Tennessee, and joined the Dominican Sisters of St. Catharine, Kentucky in 1965. Joye's ministries have included elementary and adult education, adult spiritual and ministry formation, vocation ministry, and congregational leadership. As a pastoral associate, she facilitated grief groups, coordinated outreach and service ministries and trained Ministers of Care and bereavement ministers. Joye worked in the Archdiocese of Chicago and the Diocese of Joliet teaching and facilitating theological reflection, facilitating groups and teaching in the Lay Ministry Training Programs. She helped design and implement the Institute for Spiritual Leadership program for the Diocese of Joliet. Joye received her Masters of Religious Education from Seattle University and her Doctor of Ministry from the University of St. Mary of the Lake, Mundelein, IL. Joye served on the board of WELLSTREAMS: A Center for Feminine Spirituality. During her congregational leadership terms, Joye served on both the Member Board and Board of Directors of the CDN.



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