



To Praise
To Bless
To Preach

Congregation of the Holy Cross

A publication of the Sisters of St. Dominic, Amityville, NY

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Our Preaching

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Dominicans in Action

Sister Joan Losson Celebrates 50 Years as an Amityville Dominican

by Beth Snell, eighth grade teacher at St. Nicholas School

How do you recognize a lifetime of dedication and commitment? That was the dilemma faced by the faculty of St. Nicholas School, Brooklyn, as they marked the Golden Jubilee of their principal, Sister Joan Losson, OP, and her 30 years of service at St. Nicholas, both as an excellent teacher and dedicated administrator. St. Nicholas School in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, was the second school opened by the Sisters of St. Dominic 137 years ago and is a short walk from the original Motherhouse on Montrose Avenue.

To celebrate the life and contributions of Sister Joan, a skit and PowerPoint presentation were used to illustrate her life and to help students understand that Sister Joan made decisions in her life that affected all present in the school. Students narrated and acted out the skit, beginning with Sister Joan's baptism in St. Margaret's in Middle Village, to her high school days at Bishop McDonnell High School, where her friendship with Amityville Dominican Sister John Anthony (Sister Kathleen Kelly) began. Each scene in her life was illustrated with photographs from her life. The skit included her Investing Day, as "she" and other "young novices" (played by first graders) made their religious profession in Queen of the Rosary Chapel in Amityville.

The students performed skits reenacting some of the creative lessons that Sister Joan gave while teaching at St. Nicholas in the 70's and 80's. One skit showed Sister teaching the Polka to her class. The audience joined "Sister Joan" who was clapping to keep her "class" in step with the music. The audience applauded with joy as the dancers exited stage right. Another scene portrayed a very creative Social Studies lesson that Sister Joan gave while teaching. The eighth grader who played Sister Joan ran a filmstrip about Women's Suffrage and students performed



Sister Joan Losson with her fans.



a play for the school enacting a march for the right to vote while singing a lively song. Once again the audience had a glimpse of what it must have been like to be a student sitting in Sister Joan's classroom.

Later scenes showed what has become familiar to all in the audience: Sister Joan working tirelessly in her office as Principal, greeting students entering the building, awarding certificates at assemblies, spending countless hours caring for all. The final skit brought the audience to S. Joan's "office" for a typical Tuesday morning staff meeting.

A series of pictures expressing the appreciation of the entire school community was shown against a backdrop of Dominican symbols and the mural of St. Dominic receiving the Rosary.

The cast and stagehands ended the day's celebration with one final song, "Shout to the Lord." The smiles on their faces as they sang expressed their happiness that all had gone well. Everyone had spoken clearly and remembered their lines. Everyone in the St. Nicholas community continues to thank God for Sister Joan's presence.

From the desk of Virginia Maguire, OP Prioress



Dear Friends,

Founders' Day weekend – September 6th and 7th – marked the beginning of our 150th Jubilee celebrations. On September 6th approximately 600 Sisters, Associates and friends celebrated the opening of the 150th Jubilee at a Mass celebrated by Bishop Ignatius Catanello in Most Holy Trinity Church, Williamsburg, Brooklyn. It was significant to begin our celebration here since this is the place of our first mission in the United States. The legacy of our founding Sisters continues 150 years later with the presence of our Sisters in the school and parish of Most Holy Trinity.

As the procession of banners moved down the aisle, identifying each of the Dominican congregations that trace their roots to Regensburg, Germany, it revealed the unfolding of our story. As a result of four Sisters responding to an invitation to educate the children of German immigrants, there is a Dominican presence in most states of the United States, Puerto Rico, South America, Africa and Germany. Thousands of Dominican Sisters and Associates minister to God's people in so many varied ways.

The following day, September 7th, the 150th Jubilee was celebrated in Amityville with approximately 600 Sisters, Associates and friends. This celebration began with a procession to the cemetery in which the names of all our forbears were recited. It indeed was a powerful experience to process in and out of each row of graves while listening attentively to the litany of names being recited. Remembering their remarkable lives and struggles stretches our imagination to what is possible today.

During the Vesper Service that followed a member of each of the congregations that can trace their roots to the Dominican Sisters of Amityville spoke about the way the holy preaching happens today through their diverse ministries of education, farming, prison work, day care, nursing, social work, pastoral care, etc. The holy preaching continues...

The Holy Preaching of the Gospel message has always been at the heart of our ministries. Our founding Sisters responded to the need to educate the children of German immigrants. From the very beginning our Sisters have always been open to the needs of the people as they unfolded. Because of their courageous responses, our Sisters continue to be inspired to open their hearts to the new and unexpected invitations that are extended to them. This edition of *Our Preaching* features our diverse ministries, highlighting the present reality of our ministry experiences.

As we celebrate our 150th Jubilee, we are aware of the rich relationships we share with you. You are our Partners in Ministry, making it possible for the Amityville Dominicans to imagine another way of bringing the Gospel of truth to the people of God and all creation at this time in our history. As we tell our story in this new era, the retelling will ever be new in light of the experience of this time and place. Thus, our communal story will keep unfolding in response to the needs which call for preaching the Gospel of truth, mercy and peace. We pray in gratitude for the blessing that your presence continues to be for the Sisters of St. Dominic.

May the holy preaching continue in our very lives!

Gratefully in St. Dominic and St. Catherine

Virginia Maguire, OP

Virginia Maguire, OP
Prioress



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The American Congregation of the Holy Cross, Amityville Dominican Sisters, is a community of more than 600 women religious. Our Motherhouse is in New York but our Sisters minister in eight other states, Puerto Rico, Colombia, and the Dominican Republic. We are a preaching/teaching community always seeking creative ways to minister in the present moment.

Excerpt From the Vision Statement of the Sisters of St. Dominic

We Dominican women religious called to be signs of joy and hope, commit ourselves to incarnating the Gospel, deepening our life of prayer, searching for Truth, discerning the needs of the Church and ministering to the people of God.

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And The Teaching Continues

The Opening Word Offers Women a Second Chance at Education

by Mary Porter

In 1991, through her parish outreach work, Sister Mary Ryan, OP recognized the growing need for adult education for single mothers who lacked high school diplomas or job skills. These women struggled to move out of the welfare system into employment and independence. She and Sister Margaret Briody, OP opened a small program to teach basic literacy and English language skills, and thus The Opening Word Program began in Wyandanch.

The Program's goal is to help undereducated and unemployed women become independent wage earners and self-confident, goal-oriented heads of their families. The Opening Word Program prepares women for the High School Equivalency Examination and helps with job preparedness and parenting skills. Since 1991, The Opening Word has enabled many women to help themselves and their families to break the cycle of illiteracy and poverty. In 1995 The Opening Word was replicated at the Sisters' Motherhouse in Amityville in response to the need for English language skills in the growing immigrant population.

Five full-time teachers as well as lay and religious volunteers, many of whom are "retired" teachers, staff the sites. One Sister, a certified social worker, divides her time between the two locations. Participants attend class while their own children are in school.

Some of the women who participate in the program are sent by the Suffolk County Department of Labor. Many are homeless,



single mothers, on public assistance and/or victims of abuse. Once they begin their study at The Opening Word, however, their lives begin to turn around. Success stories abound. At The Opening Word the women find themselves in a supportive environment, surrounded by loving teachers who provide one-on-one instruction and constant encouragement.

The Opening Word is a not-for-profit organization and a sponsored ministry of the Sisters of St. Dominic. It depends on grants, private foundations and benefactors for its funding. If you would like more information on The Opening Word, please contact Sister Mary Ryan at (631) 643-0541.

St. Patrick's Brooklyn Dominican Associates

by S. Barbara Nirrengarten, OP

For the past 45 years, a small group of women in Brooklyn has been faithfully working to support the Amityville Dominicans. In the past, a Dominican Associates Chapter functioned in each parish where our Dominican Sisters ministered. However, as the presence of our Sisters in schools diminished, so did the parish chapters. At present, the only chapter still in existence is at St. Patrick's in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn. Most of the children and grandchildren of these women were educated by Amityville Dominicans.

It is the remembrance of our Sisters' many years of dedicated service to St. Patrick's School and Parish that motivates these good women to continue to support our Congregation. During the year the Brooklyn Dominican Associates sponsor cake sales, bus rides

and flea markets and hold raffles at their monthly meetings. In the past, these women traveled to our craft fairs and are now supporters of our annual Dominican Gala and Beauty of the Spirit Luncheon. Each Christmas they send many practical, individual gifts to our senior Sisters in Amityville.

Ladies Night Out is the main fundraiser of St. Patrick's Dominican Associates Chapter. Over 200 ladies attend, have a delicious dinner and a wonderful time. There are a variety of prizes which the ladies solicit and plenty of chances are taken to make this a very successful occasion. All proceeds are for the benefit of the Sisters of St. Dominic, Amityville.

These women have long been dedicated supporters of our Congregation. God bless them all!

Our History

Dominican Sisters Now Serve in a Variety of Ministries

by Mary Porter in collaboration with S. Roseann McHale, OP

So many people were educated by the Amityville Sisters of St. Dominic over several generations that the public perception is that these women were and are primarily teachers. In the past most Sisters were educated and trained to be teachers and healthcare providers. That began to change, however, after the Second Vatican Council called for the adaptation of religious life to the needs of the times. Religious orders were asked to reevaluate themselves and their work in the Church and in society and to collaborate with the laity to pass on their charism for future generations.

Amityville Dominicans originally came from a cloistered Congregation in Germany and when they began their life in America they were called even at that time to meet the “needs of the time.” That meant setting up schools, hospitals, and orphanages. Their work became so active in the communities they served that in 1890 the Congregation made the difficult decision to move from being a cloistered Second Order community to a Third Order community of “active contemplatives,” working in the public arena.

What is not well-known is that in recent decades the Amityville Dominicans have adapted to changing needs by expanding their ministries into many new areas. Today, Sisters engage their preaching charism in the following arenas:

- **Ministries of Healthcare:** as doctors, nurses, therapists, technicians, hospital chaplains, and patient advocates.

- **Ministries to the Elderly:** as nursing home administrators and senior housing and family care advocates.
- **Parish Ministries:** as spiritual directors, pastoral associates, college campus chaplains, retreat and spirituality program coordinators, directors of music, liturgists, and stewardship directors.
- **Ministries of Education:** as college, elementary, and high school teachers and administrators; as educators in literacy, childcare, developmentally disabled, and adult education programs; as guidance counselors, youth ministers, tutors, and in religious education programs and technology education; and as diocesan office administrators and staff.
- **Ministries of the Arts:** as artists, musicians, poets, and writers.
- **Ministries of Social Justice:** as parish outreach ministers, peace advocates, lawyers, paralegals, social workers, and advocates for immigrants; as staff in community gardens and neighborhood centers; and as administrators for Catholic Charities.
- **Services to the Congregation:** in leadership, clerical, communications, development, and financial services; in formation, vocation, and early religious life development; in intercessory prayer; in senior Sisters’ care and dietary services, and as archivists.

In order to support Sisters in their ministries, the Amityville Dominicans established the Ministry Support Fund. Primarily supported by the Dominican Gala, this fund assists those ministries in need of additional funding in order to continue or enhance their work. For example:

...*S. Karen Lademann* offers her students at Most Holy Trinity Elementary School in Williamsburg, Brooklyn a small group setting for more individualized attention by a certified special education teacher.

...*S. Eve Gillcris* teaches immigrants of Williamsburg and Greenpoint sufficient English to enhance their working conditions, prepare them for U.S. citizenship and take the G.E.D. test.

...*S. Teresa Fontanez* helps children in Culebra, Puerto Rico master academic skills, acquire good study habits and build high self-esteem in order to prevent them from dropping out of school.

...*S. Sally Butler* and *S. Georgianna Glose*, through Fort Greene Sprouts in Brooklyn, help city families develop a love for the Earth. Ministry Support Fund monies pay for seeds, gardening materials and age-appropriate gardening books that will connect children to the Earth.

...*S. Peggy Krajci*, with her staff at the Jamaica Neighborhood Center's Job Club, provides four seven-week cycles where individuals looking for employment opportunities come together to receive information from experienced presenters. Participants then work, collaborate and support each other in the job search process.

...*S. Teresita Rivera* leads a team of lay and religious in Bayamon, Puerto Rico giving excellent care and service to 180 senior citizens who come to the Centro Geriatrico El Remanso.

...*S. Mary Rose Galloy* provides social work services to adult women in The Opening Word Program as they gain the literacy skills needed to become active members of their community and advance in the work force.

...*S. Jeanne Clark* develops strong children's programs at the Sophia Learning Center that will enable children to understand their connection to the land and the universe.

...*S. Zaida Gonzalez & S. Providencia Perez* continue to build our newest mission, Proyecto Villa Esperanza, in the Dominican Republic by working with the residents through religious, social and educational activities.

...*S. Peggie Merritt*, principal at St. Michael's Elementary School in Brooklyn, brings programs to her school that will help faculty and students understand that the human and natural worlds are one sacred community.

...*S. Marie Aimee Koonmen* provides assistance to homeless families through Bethany House in Roosevelt.

...*S. Kay McCarthy*, Outreach Coordinator at St. Ignatius Parish, Hicksville, provides much needed services to those seeking assistance.

There are so many people who depend on the services the Sisters provide. These examples illustrate just some of the ways our Sisters use their talents in ministry today.

*As prophetic witnesses in collaboration with others ...
we will be responsible members of the universe,
we will promote the dignity of marginalized persons ...*

Excerpt from the Vision Statement
of the Sisters of St. Dominic

Mission Statement of the Development Office

As Dominican women we are committed to proclaim the Gospel in an ever changing world and to serve the people of God. Through this Mission the Ministry of Development has an emphasis on our retired and infirm Sisters and those who work in service for the people of God.

Philosophy of the Development Office

*We are rich only through what we give,
and poor only through what we refuse ...*

Anne Swetchin

The Mission of Development flows from our goal and philosophy as Sisters of St. Dominic. The activities of Development are designed to assist the Congregation as it adapts its ministries and renews its commitment to continue its work in response to the needs of the people of God. We invite others to partner with us and join in our efforts to preach God's Word through our ministries.

The Ministry of Development has as its main purpose the building of financial resources so as to enhance the viability and longevity of the Mission of the Congregation.

The goals of the Development Office are:

- to assist in planning for a viable future;
- to research the needs of the Congregation and assist in identifying and soliciting funding sources;
- to coordinate fundraising projects that benefit the Amityville Dominicans.

Our work in Development allows the Congregation to exercise more faithful stewardship of its resources. The Congregation invites people to share and to believe in the Amityville Dominicans by establishing and nurturing relationships with each person who invests in the Congregation. The Ministry of Development is the conduit through which these relationships are built.

The Ministry of Development focuses on the belief that –

- everything we have is a gift from God and we are stewards of all we receive;
- Development is a vehicle that enables us to discern the needs of the Church;
- we have a responsibility to our donors to provide the highest level of trust, confidentiality and accountability.

Looking to the Future

Vocations

By S. Kathleen Steadman, OP

These are truly exciting times in religious life! Those of us who have been working in the vineyard over the last 25 years or more have seen dramatic changes. The number of women asking to enter our Congregation has diminished greatly; the age of the women who came to us over the last several years averaged 30 to 40 years old, and the women had already completed one or more college degrees and were working in a professional capacity. Many were ministering in their parishes and lived independently in apartments or homes that they owned. We have been blessed with seven new members over the past few years. They have added greatly to the spirit of the Congregation and to the work they are doing for God's people.

Over the last four years our Vocation Minister has discerned religious life with five young women, ages 27 - 35. One entered our Congregation in August 2003 and another has requested entrance in February 2004.

Four women began the discernment process in September 2003. The discernment program is a process whereby a woman meets with the Vocation Minister twice a month for two hours and attends spiritual and social events of the Congregation. She may also begin to visit local communities of our Sisters to pray with them and join them for a meal.

As Dominican Sisters we know that God will continue to call dedicated and caring women to work with us in building God's Kingdom. God calls, and we must place ourselves at the service of the women who come seeking to discern their place in God's plan. In Jeremiah 29:11-14, we read God's Word: "For surely, I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future filled with hope. When you search for me you will find me, if you seek me with all your heart." One of the ways we place ourselves in the path of young women is through advertising who we are

and what we are about. We have brochures and prayer cards available, we advertise in magazines and inform the local newspapers about our various events; Sisters are sometimes interviewed. This year we advertised our Congregation and its works on the Silver Screen by placing a slide in a movie theatre that has five screens and 17,000 patrons a month for a period of three months.

Young people need to know there are THREE ways to commit your life; a single person with a career or a married person with a family are only two of the ways. All vocations are important to God's plan and all must be discerned carefully by each person. Which lifestyle will help a young woman fulfill God's plan? Which lifestyle will result in the happiness she needs to bring about God's Kingdom? These are the questions she needs to bring to prayer and discernment. Dominican Sisters are committed to be signs of joy and hope and what could be more hopeful than young women who elect to join our Congregation and continue the Dominican charism.

Dominican Associates Program

by Mary Porter

On May 18, 2003 the Congregation welcomed 11 women as Amityville Dominican Associates at the annual Bonding of Associate Candidates. Through this ceremony, Associate Members "bond" themselves publicly to the Amityville Dominicans. At the same ceremony, many Associate Members celebrated their 20th, 15th, and 10th year anniversaries as Associate Members.

Amityville Dominican Associate Members are women and men, single and married who live out their Baptismal call to follow Jesus Christ in the spirit of Dominic and Catherine according to the vision of the Amityville Congregation. At present there are 85 Associate Members and 3 candidates. Associate Members are invited to participate in the activities of the Congregation and to join with a community of Sisters and Associates for regular prayer at least once a month. Through these activities, the Congregation



provides Associate Members with channels of spiritual enrichment and opportunities to participate in its shared mission.

This year's new members are: Josephine Baffa, Helen Butler, Ginny Campbell, Anne Carter, Maria Fishman, Glenda Harry, Ruth Hughes, Jane Palma, Michelina Pastore, Mary Jane Ryan, and Kathleen Sera. Two of the new Associates, Ginny Campbell and Mary Jane Ryan, who are also former vowed members, shared the significance of this day for them. Ginny described it as a wonderful day of peace and joy. Mary Jane said that the day of bonding was a graced moment. Both agreed that they feel very blessed to be reunited with the Dominican Family.

First National College Preaching Conference

by S. Gina Fleming, OP

The first national Preaching in Action Conference for college students took place at St. Thomas Aquinas College in Sparkill, New York during the week of May 17, 2003. Twenty-three students and 10 adult mentors from 12 colleges, including Molloy College in Rockville Centre, participated in this groundbreaking event for the Dominican Order.



College students gather in Sparkill, NY for "Preaching Conference"

The goal of the conference was to educate young people on the "Life and Mission of the Dominican Order." With the help of 20 wonderfully gifted Dominicans who came from different congregations, provinces, and geographic sections of the country, we believe that goal was achieved.

The presentations included: "Preaching in the Dominican Tradition," "History, Traditions and Saints of the Dominican Order," "Preaching through Music," "The Interfaith Mission of the Dominican Order," preaching the "Signs of the Times," "Dominican Mission in Relation to Global Peace and Justice Issues," "Preaching Through the Creative Arts," and a ministry immersion experience. The week was filled with opportunities for young people to obtain a better understanding of Dominican life.

At the end of the conference it was clear that the students felt a real sense of who we ARE as Dominicans and what we are ABOUT in Mission. In the closing liturgy students committed themselves to initiate at their school campus several action steps around the charism of Dominican preaching. This was a direct result of their experience at the conference and their own realization that they, too, are called to preach the Good News.

With God's grace we will continue this conference on an annual basis. May it be another collaborative way to ensure that "the preaching continues."

Beauty of the Spirit Luncheon is a Spectacular Success

by Mary Porter

Almost 520 guests came to the Motherhouse of the Sisters of St. Dominic in Amityville on June 20, 2003 to celebrate the "beauty of the spirit of women" at the second annual Beauty of the Spirit Luncheon. It was a spectacular and joyous occasion and a wonderful opportunity to greet old friends, meet new friends and simply enjoy each other's company. To accommodate the large crowd the luncheon was held outdoors under tents on the Motherhouse grounds.

The luncheon began with a moving prayer service created and led by the Amityville Dominican Youth Preachers—a group of high school students that meet regularly to learn about the Dominican charism. After a truly delicious lunch, guests were treated to an inspirational talk by S. Pat Duffy, OP, entitled "We are God's Work of Art." A raffle of many lovely gift baskets and Ralph Lauren gift certificates added to the excitement. Afterwards, guests were able to take guided tours of the Motherhouse.

More than \$44,000 was netted to support the Sisters' Health Resource Center, a Center which provides wellness, preventive and advocacy programs for our Sisters. Special thanks to our co-chairs, Esterine Bonnanno and Susanne Dziepak, who did a superb job and worked tirelessly to ensure the luncheon's success. The luncheon was organized by a hardworking committee of Sisters and laywomen including: S. Margaret Althisar, S. Alice Byrnes, Ginny Campbell, Mary Eversoll, Winnie Greeley, S. Laura Helbig, Cathy Katz, S. Ancilla Keinberger, S. Patricia Lee, Barbara Lukacovic, Jane Matchett, S. Virginia Maguire, S. Elizabeth McGarvey, S. Maelene Meehan, S. Dorothy Monks, S. Muriel Agnes Ott, Mary Jane Ryan, Betty Schmidt, Anne Seeley, S. Peggy Tully, S. Grace Regina Wingefeld, and the Development Office staff.

Special thanks to the sponsors who helped to make the event possible: Leadership Sponsors: Mr. & Mrs. Donald Eversoll and Merrill Lynch; and Special Sponsors: Mr. Don Cowdell, CulinArt, and S. Diane Morgan. Thanks also to everyone who participated in this special event. We are already looking forward to next June!





Sisters of St. Dominic Development Office
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Did You Know?

- You can make a gift to the Sisters of St. Dominic in honor of or in memory of a loved one. Any gift can be made in the name of another person, living or deceased, as a lasting memorial on our Tree of Life or as a Memorial Tree planted on the Motherhouse grounds or on our donor wall in St. Dominic's Park.
- If your company has a matching gift program, you can double your gift to the Sisters of St. Dominic.
- You can remember the Sisters of St. Dominic in your Will. Our legal title is: Sisters of the Order of St. Dominic, Amityville, NY.

For more information call Eileen M. Nolan, OP, Director of Development, (631) 842-6000, ext. 238, or Patricia Chambers Daly at ext. 241.

We continue to be so grateful to all our generous friends who support the Sisters of St. Dominic and their ministries.

Calendar of Events

Join us in the Evening Prayer Vesper Service

Sundays at 4:30 p.m.

In St. Albert's Chapel, Sisters of St. Dominic,
555 Albany Avenue, Amityville, NY

on the following Sundays:

October 19, 2003

November 16, 2003

December 14, 2003 Lessons & Carols

January 18, 2004

February 15, 2004

Save The Date:

150th Jubilee Dominican Gala

October 17, 2003

Garden City Hotel

Help Us Build Connections

Do you have friends or family members who would like to receive this newsletter? If so, please fill in their name and address below and mail this coupon to: Mary Porter, Development Office, Sisters of St. Dominic, 555 Albany Avenue, Amityville, NY 11701. *Thank you.*

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