



To Praise
To Bless
To Preach

Congregation of the Holy Cross

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

Our Preaching

Inside

Letter from the Prioress 2

St. Pancras Parish Celebrates a Century with Dominican Sisters 3

Our History 4
Dominican Sisters Gather to Commemorate 150 Years of Service to God's People on Founders' Day

Sisters in Outreach Ministries Promote the Dignity of All 6

The 2003 Dominican Gala was an Evening to Remember 7

One Sister's Unique Ministry 7

Dominicans in Action

Sister Aimee Koonmen's Ministry, Bethany House, Provides Shelter for Homeless Women and Children

"As I walked up to the podium to accept my degree, I realized that I was not taking those steps by myself, but with everyone who had believed in me. All of the assistance I have received from Bethany House is very deeply appreciated, but *your faith in me* is by far most treasured."

These are the words of "Sarah," a 25-year-old single mother who suddenly found herself homeless. Bethany House provided shelter, day care, and a helping hand so that Sarah could complete her education. She is now a fourth grade teacher.

Bethany House, based in Roosevelt, Long Island, is a not-for-profit organization founded by the Sisters of St. Dominic in 1978 in response to the need for shelter for homeless women and their children. Sister Aimee Koonmen, OP, one of its three founding Sisters, is the Administrator and the driving force behind Bethany House. Throughout its 25 years of service, Bethany House has consistently provided safe, supportive emergency housing, combined with comprehensive social services. Over the past 25 years Bethany House has expanded and currently provides shelter for 50 persons nightly. Bethany House has a high success rate—of the women who have stayed at Bethany House for more than two weeks, 92% have successfully found appropriate housing. At Bethany House each person receives individual attention from case workers who have extensive experience with the problems faced by those caught in the crisis of homelessness.

Bethany House's mission stems from its belief that each person deserves and needs adequate food, clothing, and shelter, provided in a nurturing and sustaining environment. Bethany House coordinates



Family-style dinner at "Bethany South." Sister Aimee is seated at the head of the table.

with other human service agencies in Nassau County to provide services that can help clients make lasting positive change.

Bethany House operates many innovative and cost effective programs that target the pockets of intense poverty existing within our generally affluent region. Some of Bethany's current programs include:

- Transitional and permanent housing for single-parent families along with the needed support services for an extended period.
- The **Enhanced Emergency Shelter Program** that serves women who are homeless and psychiatrically challenged, by coordinating with various community-based mental health centers.
- The **24/7** program which services individuals and families struggling with psychiatric impairments, substance addictions, AIDS-related illnesses and frail elderly women who need round-the-clock support. It is designed to serve the special needs of individuals for whom the crisis of homelessness adds an unbearable burden to an already painfully difficult existence.

From the desk of Virginia Maguire, OP Prioress



Happy Valentine's Day!

As we celebrate a Season of the Heart during the month of February, we are reminded of the many hearts that have touched the Dominican Sisters of Amityville these last 150 years. Our celebrations which are highlighted in this edition of *Our Preaching* have been celebrations of gratitude acknowledging God's faithful and loving presence to our Congregation and the generous hearts of our benefactors who support our ministries with resources and encouragement.

Our celebrations thus far have instilled within us the importance of listening to one's heart. This is exactly what our foundresses did in pursuing their dream of continuing the Dominican Mission in America. Hearts overflowing with love are quite evident in their May 22, 1853 correspondence to Bishop Valentin Riedel requesting his permission to be released from his diocese in Germany in order to go to America. They wrote: "Following the attractions of their hearts, the most obediently undersigned with childlike assurance presume to have recourse to your Grace for a favorable reception of our most sincere petition." Mission has always been at the heart of our Dominican vocation.

In the retelling of our story about the opening of schools, orphanages, hospitals, a nursing home, shelters, outreach programs, housing for the elderly, child care, organic farming, a spirituality center, etc., it is apparent that the Sisters of St. Dominic have been and continue to be attentive to the attraction of their hearts in pursuing their Mission – The Holy Preaching. You, too, are woven into our story through your loving hearts of prayer and financial and moral support.

The human interest stories in this edition of *Our Preaching* will connect you with some of the ministries of our Sisters. The feature story on Bethany House is about extending hearts to those who find themselves in circumstances beyond their control. This publication also features the ministries of our Sisters who are involved in Parish Outreach Programs.

The wonderful story of Dominican Day at St. Pancras portrays the grateful hearts of the priests, parents, former students and present day students for the vibrant presence of the Sisters in this parish. The Dominican Jubilee Gala captures the spirit of our Sisters and our Partners in Ministry. Their combined efforts raised over \$414,000 for our ministries.

Your generous support of our ministries enables our Sisters to follow the attractions of their hearts in responding to the needs of this time and place. You are a blessing and a sign of hope for us as our story unfolds into the future through our ministerial involvements.

Gratefully,

Virginia Maguire, OP

Virginia Maguire, OP
Prioress

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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St. Pancras Parish Celebrates a Century with Dominican Sisters

As part of its ongoing 100th anniversary celebration, St. Pancras Parish in Glendale, Queens, celebrated a special Mass to honor the hundreds of Sisters who taught or lived in the parish over the years. Dozens of Dominican Sisters met with former students who traveled back to Glendale from all over the country to reunite with their teachers and friends.

St. Pancras Parish was founded in 1904 and four years later Dominican Sisters were invited to teach in the school. With the exception of only one year St. Pancras School has always had a Dominican principal. The school was fully staffed with Sisters, and at one point there were so many Dominican Sisters teaching at St. Pancras that a second convent was purchased.

During the special liturgy the offertory gifts were brought to the altar by five former principals: Sisters Jane Creighton, Miriam Gregory Kreppin, Mary Hughes, Eva Mazzetta, and Mary Sullivan. They were joined by the current principal, Sister Joseph Maureen Zick. A very moving part of the ceremony took place after the offertory. The Pastor, Father Vincent Gallo, invited all the Sisters to stand and face the congregation and receive a special blessing from those present.

After Mass, hundreds of participants watched as Sister Rose Winifred, senior Sister at the celebration, blessed a statue of Our Lady that was donated by the Annunciation Episcopal Church, a nearby church that had just closed its doors. Many Sisters remembered Sunday afternoon walks past that church on Cooper Avenue.

Following the blessing of the statue, everyone proceeded to the reception in the school hall. The walls were decorated with photos



Former principals: Sisters Mary Hughes, OP (left), Eva Mazzetta, OP (second from left), Jane Creighton, OP (far right), along with the current principal, Joseph Maureen Zick, OP (second from right).

donated by the Sisters from their teaching days. A PowerPoint slide show accompanied with music ran all day showing pictures of the Sisters and highlights from their days at St. Pancras.

“Dominican Sunday” was a day full of emotion for the Sisters and all those in attendance. At the first sight of their beloved teachers, as the Sisters processed into the church at the beginning of Mass, many people in the pews were quietly weeping—they were so moved by it. Afterwards, the happy stories shared by former students made the Sisters feel very blessed and proud of their achievements.



Sisters Reunite at St. Pancras.

Our History

Dominican Sisters Gather to Commemorate 150 Years of Service to God's People on Founders' Day

The fall of 2003 marked a special time for the Amityville Dominican Sisters and for all those Dominican women whose roots can be traced back to Holy Cross Monastery in Regensburg, Germany. During the weekend of September 6th and 7th, the Sisters proudly celebrated their 150 years of preaching the Gospel through service to God's people. On Saturday the 6th, a Mass was held at the Sisters' first mission, Most Holy Trinity Church in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. Over 500 people joined the celebration which began with a banner procession representing the eleven "daughter" congregations. It was a joyous beginning to the weekend.



Procession through the cemetery

On Sunday the focus shifted to the Motherhouse in Amityville. After prayer, a procession of hundreds of Sisters, Associates, family members and friends made their way from Rosary Hall Chapel to the cemetery and walked solemnly through the rows of graves as each of the names of the deceased was read for all to hear. As the procession walked back from the cemetery the names of all the current members of the Congregation were recited. This moving ceremony was followed by a memorable Vesper Service in St. Albert's Chapel. Sisters visiting from the other congregations across the United States who trace their roots through the Amityville Congregation to Regensburg were the preachers. They reminded all present that the Dominican Mission is alive and continues into the future as each Sister continues "to preach" through a variety of ministries.

The celebration continued, with less formality, under a tent on the Motherhouse grounds. Everyone gathered together for supper and dancing—with the jubilation of women who continue to be "signs of joy and hope."



Sisters Mary Butler, OP, Lenore Toscano, OP, and Marjorie McGregor, OP enjoying the party

- The **Kids Who Care Program** that provides school-aged children who are not homeless the opportunities to better understand the struggles of homeless children on Long Island. It includes consciousness-raising activities and planned action steps, and has been used by an average of 15 schools each year for 8 years.
- **Workout**, an employment program that provides job placement and career counseling to women who are seeking to enter the job market.
- The **Adopt a Family for Christmas** program, a Christmas project for needy children working in conjunction with North Shore University Hospital and other civic and church groups.
- **The Full Cupboard** which is a food pantry program that provides non-perishable food items for its homeless guests and for numerous families who are in need. Food is collected by churches and community groups and its distribution is coordinated by Bethany House volunteers, themselves formerly homeless.
- **Haven**, which is the Molloy College/Bethany House Coalition for the Homeless that sponsors workshops at the College to educate students about homelessness. Haven's "Box Town" was a fundraising and consciousness-raising event for students who spent the night in a cardboard box in solidarity with the homeless.
- **Heading Home**, a program that serves women who have achieved at least six months of sobriety in a structured rehab environment and who need a limited extension of structured living in order to be ready for independent living and job success.
- The **Rest Stop** which provides crisis housing for families and single women who are not eligible for assistance under the new guidelines of the Welfare Reform Act. This program relies extensively on volunteer assistance and fundraising efforts.
- **Parents and Children Together**, a family counseling program that enables women in recovery to reunite with their children who have been placed in the foster care system.
- **Bellmore House**, the newest residence, which provides clean, safe and secure housing for women and children who have been disenfranchised and temporarily need a helping hand to re-stabilize their lives and careers.
- The **Healthy Mothers, Healthy Children** project recently added to respond to the unique needs of women who are either pregnant or have just given birth and whose lives are further challenged by the crisis of homelessness. This project provides case management, skill development, workshops and training sessions to help these young women as they take on the responsibility of raising a child.

Finding permanent housing has become more difficult in recent years as the cost of housing has grown much faster than wages. "The crisis has grown worse since September 11, 2001," says Sister Aimee. She is seeing an increase in employed women who need emergency housing. Bethany House relies on fundraising and grants for acquiring housing and also works with the Nassau County Department of Social Services to expand services through per-diem reimbursement. The Sisters of St. Dominic congratulate Sister Aimee and Bethany House on 25 years of outstanding service to thousands of the region's neediest residents.

*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.

Sisters in Outreach Ministries Promote the Dignity of All

Several Amityville Dominican Sisters have answered the call to “minister to the people of God” by administering parish outreach programs that serve the needs of the poor and elderly in their communities.

Outreach programs vary from parish to parish based on different needs, but they typically offer help to the hungry and the frail or homebound elderly, along with referrals for social service assistance.

Sister Regina Hockenberry, OP is the Director of Pastoral Ministry at St. Anselm’s Parish in the Bay Ridge section of Brooklyn. Because this parish population has a high proportion of elderly, Sister Regina’s programs have an emphasis on elder care. She runs a monthly “Caregivers Support Group,” for example, for adults caring for an elderly parent or spouse. Sister Regina is also the moderator of “The Young at Heart,” a group of 200 seniors who meet weekly for socialization. She and her volunteers handle referrals for home care, visit the sick and homebound, operate a food pantry for the community, and prepare food baskets for distribution at Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Sister Kay McCarthy, OP is the Director of St. Ignatius Loyola Parish’s Human Services, located in Hicksville. The Human Services office, which is located in the spacious basement level of the Convent, provides a comprehensive array of services for the poor and disenfranchised in central Long Island. With infectious enthusiasm and energy, Sister Kay administers the activities of a large group of daily volunteers who receive and distribute donations of food and clothing. Bilingual volunteers advocate for clients on the telephone or in court. Volunteers also supervise the clients’ children during parenting or ESL classes held in the center. Drivers take people to local doctors, the hospital, to church, or to visit relatives. Volunteers, Sister Kay, and two

Sisters of Mercy visit the sick. Food, paper products, and gifts are delivered to the homes of shut-ins.

The center also provides bereavement support groups, immigration services, legal assistance, and arranges for the Anointing of the Sick. Eligible clients benefit from FAN (Food and Nutrition Program), a government entitlement administered by Catholic Charities which provides free food for certain income eligible seniors, young children and pregnant and postpartum women. Holiday collections and distributions are made at Thanksgiving and Christmas time.

Sister Marianne Miller, OP is the Outreach Coordinator at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Queens Village. Her ministry covers many areas of need and she is assisted by a large group of volunteers. For example, a bereavement committee sends sympathy cards; volunteers lead wake services, and regular bereavement support groups are held in English and Spanish. Eucharistic Ministers visit the homebound and patients at Mary Immaculate Hospital.

The parish hosts twice yearly blood drives, an annual health fair, and an annual food drive. ESL classes help new immigrants, and drivers help those with transportation needs.

A growing number of families rely on Our Lady of Lourdes for food assistance. “The number of hungry families has doubled over the past four years that

I’ve been here, and the needs increased after September 11, 2001,” says Sister Marianne. The Food Bank for New York City, as well as Catholic Charities deliver food to the parish food pantry, and the St. Vincent de Paul Society also contributes regular assistance. Volunteers sort the food and stock the pantry shelves. A group of 25 volunteers coordinates weekly food distribution to the homebound. Several

Protestant churches in the area work together with Sister Marianne to contribute financial and volunteer support to help feed the hungry.

Sister Margaret Althisar, OP has been the Coordinator of Parish Outreach for St. Martin of Tours Parish in Amityville for the past 11 years. She manages the efforts of many workers who provide services at the Outreach Center or in the thrift shop, St. Martin’s Cloak Room. Revenues from the shop help to underwrite the outreach programs. These programs include a food pantry; a program to assist the unemployed;



Sister Margaret Althisar, OP, right, with thrift shop volunteers at St. Martin’s Cloak Room.

a case worker for the homebound or frail elderly; and, a volunteer who has been trained to assist with immigration problems.

At St. Martin’s a typical client initially comes to the Outreach Office seeking food. After the intake process, the client’s needs are determined and an effort is made to access various entitlements. The hungry are given a three-day supply of food and connected with the FAN program for monthly food packages. St. Martin’s Outreach coordinates services with several other agencies such as Catholic Charities, St. Vincent de Paul Society, Long Island Cares, and Island Harvest.

Sister Margaret loves her job. She and the other Dominican Sisters involved in outreach say that they strive to fulfill the Amityville Dominicans’ Vision Statement to “promote the dignity of marginalized persons.”

2003 Dominican Gala

An Evening to Remember

On October 17, 2003 over 500 people gathered at the Garden City Hotel to celebrate the Sisters of St. Dominic's 150th Jubilee Gala. It was a very joyful evening and a tremendous success—raising \$527,000 and netting over \$414,000 for the Sisters' Ministry Support Fund. All proceeds from the Gala, along with other donations specifically designated for this Fund, give us the resources to continue to support our Sisters in Ministry. The active ministries of the Sisters serve the neediest members of the community through services such as education, health care, social services, and peace and justice advocacy.

This year's Gala was especially exciting because it marked a significant milestone—the 150th Jubilee Year—and also because of this year's honorees: Sister Kathleen Kelly, OP, (honored posthumously) and Barbara Hrbek Zucker.

Sister Kathleen, who died on February 14, 2003, had a long and distinguished career in education and administration before becoming the Congregation's first Director of Development in 1986, a position that she held until she retired in 2002. Always exploring new fundraising opportunities, she organized the first Dominican Gala in 1993. The St. Catherine of Siena Award was accepted on her behalf by Sister Jeanne Puff, OP, and Brian Madden, with great appreciation of her lifetime commitment and with sadness that she could not receive the honor in person.

Barbara Hrbek Zucker was awarded the Veritas Award. Barbara's philanthropic and volunteer work truly exemplifies the Dominican charism. She was educated by Dominican Sisters at St. Catherine of Sienna School and Dominican Commercial High School. Barbara and her husband Donald, through The Donald and Barbara Zucker Foundation, are committed to making a difference. Their work touches so many of God's people, especially high school students in need. The Dominican tradition runs in the family—Barbara's Aunt Mary (Sister Mary Doris O'Connell, OP) has been a Dominican for 64 years, all of which have been dedicated



The Dominican Gala Committee.



They could have danced all night!



Sister Virginia Maguire and co-chairs, Sister Kay McCarthy and David Koehler, present award to honoree Barbara Zucker, accompanied by Donald Zucker.

to education. Barbara believes that her Dominican education and the skills she acquired gave her the foundation to be successful in many areas of her life. Barbara Hrbek Zucker deserves every blessing because of the many good works she performs.

We would like to especially thank our Co-Chairs, Sister Kathleen McCarthy, OP and David Koehler, and the Gala Committee members. Special thanks go to Barbara and Donald Zucker, who worked tirelessly. We thank all who participated and rejoice in what we, as partners in Mission, have accomplished together and will continue to accomplish.

One Sister's Unique Ministry

Sister Barbara Seaward, OP, a retired nurse who lives in the Motherhouse, has built a truly unique ministry called Wings of Love. She travels with her collection of exotic parrots to senior residences, health care facilities, schools and convalescent homes, ministering to the elderly sick and disabled and delighting many with her compassionate visits. Sister Barbara's ministry began when she rescued a handicapped cockatiel and saw how the elderly nuns in the convent responded to him. She adopted more handicapped birds and found that they were able to draw people out, even autistic children. When she walks into homes and institutions, the birds always bring smiles to the faces of residents and caregivers alike.



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Did You Know?

Amityville Dominicans Are Active in Many Ministries:

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| ✦ Education (elementary, secondary and college level) | ✦ Law |
| ✦ Religious Education & Adult Education | ✦ Ministries to the Elderly |
| ✦ Health Professions; Wholistic Therapies | ✦ Ministries of the Arts |
| ✦ Parish Ministry | ✦ Service to the Congregation |
| ✦ Social Service; Counseling; ESL | ✦ Spirituality Center |
| ✦ Campus Ministry | ✦ Liturgical Music |
| ✦ Missions (Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Colombia) | ✦ Prison Ministry |
| | ✦ Peace & Justice |
| | ✦ Intercessory Prayer |

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:

February 15, 2004 May 16, 2004
April 18, 2004 June 20, 2004

Save The Date:

Irish Night

Saturday, March 6, 2004
St. Brigid's, Westbury, NY

Beauty of the Spirit Luncheon

Friday, June 18, 2004
Queen of the Rosary Motherhouse, Amityville, NY

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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