The Good News
A PUBLICATION OF THE DOMINICAN SISTERS OF HOUSTON

SPRING 2012

The Four Pillars
OF DOMINICAN LIFE
Prayer, Study, Community & Ministry

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Dear Friends,

Even though the calendar says it is spring, in Houston our temperatures have already reached 90 degrees. We have quickly passed through the period of “new life” and the greening of our trees. Now we prepare for a long hot summer.

Although the summer presents many challenges such as enjoying the out of doors without getting sunburned, it also presents special times of slowing down and appreciating family and friends. We can pause and recall all for which we are grateful. And that, dear friends, brings all of you to mind. We remain most grateful to you for all the ways you have supported us.

These are challenging times for women in religious communities, but the outpouring of support in so many ways has truly touched our hearts. Our ministry in Catholic education and services has been our labor of love, our praise to God and of course, because we are Dominican, our preaching of the Gospel. We strove to bring to reality the best schools possible to give children a love of learning and a love of their Catholic faith.

You will see in this newsletter some of the ways we continue to live out the Dominican charism: our Dominican Family continues to grow and to serve; we continue to collaborate with other Dominican congregations in ministry, study and prayer; and our sisters continue to minister to God’s children. We remain faithful to our mission, and with your constant help, we can continue to serve the people of God and to take care of our retired sisters.

Blessings to you and your family,

Carol Mayes, OP
Prioress

ON THE COVER
Our labyrinth ministry provides opportunities for peaceful prayer throughout the year. This past Lenten season, as with every Lenten season since 2004, we held a Labyrinth reflection and walk Thursdays in Lent. Participants gathered near the Labyrinth, reflected on the scriptures for the coming Lenten Sunday, and then walked the Labyrinth in prayer.

Thank you
We gratefully acknowledge all those who contributed to this issue:

Sr. Raphael Bordages, OP
Sr. Barbara Ann Cernosek, OP
Sr. Heloise Cruzat, OP
Sr. Wanda Jinks, OP
Sr. Mignonne Konecny, OP
Sr. Carletta LaCour, OP
Sr. Carol Mayes, OP
Sr. Ceil Roeger, OP
Susan Tracy, St. Catherine’s Montessori
TEACHING AWARD

Sr. Barbara Ann Cernosek was honored for the eighth time with the Top 50 Award given by the Galveston Academic Excellence Booster Club. The award is given to 50 top students in Galveston schools, and in turn those students nominate a teacher to honor who has been a strong influence in their lives. Sr. Barbara Ann is pictured here with her student Devon Lemoine, who nominated her for the award this year. Sr. Barbara Ann has been teaching in Galveston for almost 20 years. Currently, she teaches the fourth grade and also religion to the third grade at Holy Family Catholic School in Galveston.

T’AI CHI MINISTRY

Sr. Carletta LaCour, OP teaches T’ai Chi Chih to both adults and children. In January 2012, Sr. Carletta began teaching T’ai Chi Chih once a week to children, ages six to nine years old, in Ms. Jacinta’s class at St. Catherine’s Montessori in Houston. She captivated the children’s attention when she first showed them a few moves. She begins each class with a bow and tells the class, “We are honoring the mystery of God present in each one here.” The class practices eight to ten moves and then finishes with a final bow. One student told her mother, “I am so peaceful after we practice our T’ai Chi.”

Sr. Carletta has been certified to teach T’ai Chi Chih since 1996 and teaches at The Cenacle, St. Dominic’s Village, Angela House, Holly Hall, Sheltering Arms, Shalom Center, Dominican Center for Spirituality and St. Dominic Villa, the Dominican Sisters’ retirement home.

ECO JUSTICE

In March we hosted a meeting of the Dominican Alliance Eco-Justice Committee. Sisters came from Dominican congregations in Wisconsin, Illinois, and Michigan to present “Alternate Journey: A Climate for Change,” a discussion on the challenges of climate change. Presenters discussed the history of climate change, the effects of greenhouse gases on our weather patterns, the effects of our carbon footprints on our planet and many of its people, and the small life-style changes that would make a difference. Sr. Thomas Ann LaCour, OP showed what 5th graders in Catholic schools around the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston learn when they visit Camp Kappe, the School of Environmental Education. The meeting concluded with closing prayer that reminded us that while Earth is suffering, we can make a difference and are blessed to be one with all of God’s creation.

CASAA CHILD ADVOCATE 2012

At its annual fundraising dinner in April, CASA of Southeast Texas honored Sr. Emily Bordages, OP with the CASA Child Advocate 2012 award. CASA selected Sr. Emily for this award for her years of service to children as a teacher. Sr. Emily, a French teacher at Monsignor Kelly Catholic High School in Beaumont since 1964, celebrated with family, friends and members of her Dominican community. CASA trains and supervises volunteers, appointed by the courts, to advocate on behalf of abused and neglected children.
In a great celebration on April 29th, the feast day of St. Catherine of Siena, 26 women and men made their first commitment to live the Dominican charism as members of the Dominican Family. They join the 76 other Dominican Family members who have made their commitment in the last two years. During the commitment ceremony, Fr. John Rooney, pastor of St. Angela Merici in Missouri City, quoted St. Catherine of Siena, a Dominican lay woman and Doctor of the Church. St. Catherine said, “Be who God meant you to be and you will set the world on fire.” Fr. John challenged the Dominican Family to live the words of Sr. Catherine, and each member then shared how he or she will live out the Dominican charism.

All committed Dominican Family members recently completed a survey on the ways they can support and contribute their talents to the Dominican Family. Many members decided that they would like to be part of the Dominican Family leadership and will gather to plan and to begin deciding the future of the Dominican Family. This is an exciting time as these women and men pursue the best way to live out the Dominican spirit.

As the leadership of the Dominican Family moves forward, 23 men and women have just embarked on the two-year formation process involved in becoming part of the Dominican Family. This group has met over the past five months to study the four pillars of Dominican life.

This fall, Sr. M. Fabiola Velasquez Maya, OP, executive director of Dominican Sisters International, and Sr. Toni Harris, OP, International Promoter of Justice and Peace, travelled to Houston from Rome to visit with us and the Vietnamese Dominican Sisters. Sister Rose Marie Riley, a member of the Coordinating Council of DSI representing North America, also came to Houston to meet with the two Congregations. The Sisters’ visit was an opportunity for the International group to connect with the two local Houston Dominican Congregations.
SERVICE DAY

On Saturday, February 25, Dominican Family members engaged in a day of service. Members visited Angela House, engaged in outreach to day laborers, learned more about the death penalty abolition movement, and helped with spring “cleaning” the meditation gardens on the grounds of the Dominican Sisters.

The first group of Dominican Family members who went to Angela House learned about its history and future from founder Sr. Maureen O’Connell, OP. The mission of Angela House is “To provide, with sensitivity to the unique needs of women after their incarceration, a safe place where they can live, grow and become the kind of person they want to be.” Family members sorted clothing donations and shopped for items for the residents. These volunteers learned more about Angela House and about each other through working together.

Dominican Family member and Executive Director, Laura Boston, welcomed the second group of Dominican Family volunteers and several Jesuit Volunteers to the Houston Interfaith Worker Justice Center. Volunteers visited sites where day laborers gather to be picked up for work. They talked with the men waiting for work and distributed booklets on workers’ rights and the activities of the Center. Volunteers found most of the workers to be very open and willing to share their concerns, which include issues of family separation, loss of job opportunities in their home countries and harassment by police officers and others. Members of the group felt honored to meet these workers.

The third group of Dominican Family volunteers met with Dave Atwood, founder and former president of the Texas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty. Dave discussed the disparity in our justice system that disproportionately sentences the poor and people of color to death row. He told of several cases in which men on death row have been exonerated and explained that often because of poor representation, innocent men and women have been wrongly convicted. Dave then presented the group with various actions they can take to advocate for the end of the death penalty.

The fourth group of volunteers spent the day getting the meditation gardens at the Dominican Sisters’ motherhouse ready for spring. Dominican Family members were joined by sisters as they gave benches a fresh coat of paint, pulled weeds, planted fresh flowers and power washed the sidewalks. After lunch, these volunteers gathered oranges for the Dominican Sisters’ marmalade.

In November, we held our annual Arts & Crafts Sale. Guests enjoyed visiting with the sisters and shopping for the many hand-made items displayed: Christmas decorations, ceramics, knitted clothing and throws, paintings, baked goods and more. Next fall, in lieu of the annual sale, we plan to reopen our gift shop located inside St. Dominic Villa and to offer hand-made items for sale year round. Join us for an open house on November 3rd to see the gift shop and visit with the sisters.
During the last weekend in March, the Dominican Alliance gathered at our motherhouse for its spring meeting. Now in its 15th year, the Dominican Alliance is comprised of the Dominican Sister congregations of Grand Rapids, Michigan; Houston; Peace, Ohio; Racine and Sinsinawa, Wisconsin; Springfield, Illinois; and Taos, New Mexico.

The members of the Dominican Alliance embrace the mission to preach the Gospel by linking their energy, members and resources.

During their meeting, the leadership teams of these congregations spent time in theological reflection, study, prayer, contemplation, and faith sharing. Their study included a presentation by Sr. Kathlyn Mulcahy, OP on how today’s technology can be used to enhance the Dominican Mission. In addition, Sr. Linda Gibler, OP spoke on “Holy Week Reflections with Sacramentals” during which she shared the stories of water, oil, fire and wheat as they have evolved over time from their literal beginnings within the cosmos until their present day use as sacramentals within our Catholic faith.

As at each of the bi-annual meetings, members were informed about the latest collaborative activities of the existing committees of the Alliance as well as updated on the financial resources available for future work. The Vocations Committee continues its efforts to attract women to our Dominican life. The Eco-Justice Committee brings knowledge and experience to Sisters in the Dominican Alliance congregations by developing programs on Eco-Justice and presenting them to the sisters and associates when they gather. The African Connection Committee is currently working with four Dominican Sisters from Africa who are earning degrees in higher education at Aquinas College in Grand Rapids and at Ohio Dominican University in Columbus, Ohio. Congregations within the Alliance help to provide not only the financial support necessary for these Sisters’ education but also provide them supportive community life.
**Sr. Leona Castle, OP +**

**OCTOBER 11, 1918 – DECEMBER 8, 2011**

Sr. Leona was born in Port Arthur and attended St. Anthony’s Elementary and High School in Beaumont. She entered the Dominican Sisters in June 1935, made final profession in 1942 and graduated from Dominican College in 1957. Sr. Leona was a teacher or principal for over sixty years in Catholic schools in Houston, California, Orange, Port Neches and Austin. In 1984 she and Sr. Benita Kelley, OP, founded Dominican Academy, their Montessori dream school in the hill country. Sr. Leona never sought recognition for her ministry but received numerous awards for excellence in her role as teacher and administrator. Sr. Leona opened the world of knowledge to children and gave them a love of learning. In 2000 Sr. Leona retired from her education ministry and served as activities director at Sr. Dominic Villa for four years. Sr. Leona celebrated all her jubilees, including her 75th diamond jubilee in 2010. Sr. Leona died peacefully on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception.

**Sr. Camilla Micheletti, OP +**

**APRIL 26, 1932 – APRIL 5, 2012**

Sr. Camilla was born in Galveston and belonged to Sacred Heart Parish. She attended Sacred Heart Elementary and Dominican High and joined the Dominican Sisters in 1949. Sr. Camilla made final profession in 1956, graduated from Dominican College in 1968, and received a Masters in Education in 1976. She taught in Catholic elementary schools for 33 years in Galveston, Houston and Port Neches, Louisiana and California. Sr. Camilla was an artist and a musician. She was the chapel organist at the VA Medical Center from 1982 until her death and played in the Villa chapel as well. In 1984 she became the administrative assistant at St. Dominic Villa and served in several ministries there until her death. Sr. Camilla knew no stranger and loved to talk to everyone! She was a loyal follower of Dominic and a woman of deep faith and strong values. Sr. Camilla died on Holy Thursday morning, just three weeks before her eightieth birthday.
The Dominican Sisters of Houston’s legacy in Catholic education and services is deep rooted, and we continue today to serve and to preach the Gospel. When you name the Dominican Sisters of Houston as a beneficiary of your will, life insurance policy, trust, or retirement plan, you help ensure the future of our mission. If support of our mission and sisters is part of your legacy giving in your will or estate plans, please let us know. We would love to thank you for your generous commitment. If you are considering remembering the sisters as part of your estate planning, please contact us today at 713.440.3707.

DOMINICAN REMEMBRANCE
A Dominican for life. A gift for eternity.

Save the Date

JUNE 23
T’ai Chi Chih introductory session (contact Sr. Carletta LaCour, OP at 713.440.3713 or carlettaop@yahoo.com)

JULY 8–14
10th Annual Dominican Sisters’ Summer Camp
(for more information visit www.domhou.org)

OCTOBER 27
Labyrinth of Remembrance and Thanksgiving
(Chapel at St. Dominic Villa, 6501 Almeda Road)

NOVEMBER 3
Dominican Sisters Open House (to celebrate the opening of the gift shop in St. Dominic Villa)

NOVEMBER 12
Introduction to Dominican Family
(to learn more about being a member of the Dominican Family. For more information visit www.domhou.org)