

The Good News

SUMMER 2019

A PUBLICATION OF THE DOMINICAN SISTERS OF HOUSTON



THE FOUR PILLARS
of Dominican Life
PRAYER STUDY COMMUNITY MINISTRY



Greetings FROM THE prioress

Dear Friends,

In May, I had the privilege of traveling to Rome for two important meetings that occur every three years. The first meeting was the 21st plenary session of UISG, a worldwide, canonically approved organization of Superiors General of Institutes of Catholic Women Religious. UISG provides an international forum for superiors general in their role as leaders of congregations. UISG offers resources and encourages collaboration among women religious congregations worldwide. Over 850 superiors attended the May meetings, representing 80 countries and 13 languages. Topics discussed included the future vision of religious life, caring for creation (the implications of Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'*), living inter-culturally, and the call to engage in interreligious dialogue.



Prioress, Donna Pollard, OP

On the last morning, the Superiors General met with Pope Francis. During our audience, the Pope launched the "Nuns Healing Hearts" Campaign in honor of the 10th anniversary of Talitha Kum, the international network of consecrated life against human trafficking. I stayed in Rome the following week to attend meetings of Dominican Sisters International, an organization of Dominican Sisters that represents over 20,000 Dominican Sisters who are members of 147 different congregations and present in 121 countries. We heard reports from the organization's continental coordinators, justice and peace coordinator, young sisters' collaborative project and many others. What an overwhelming experience it

Thank YOU

We gratefully acknowledge all those who contributed to this issue:

Sr. Mary Brenda, OP	John Hensley, Dominican Family
Sr. Pat Casey, OP	Sr. Wanda Jinks, OP
Sr. Kitty Carter, OP	Sr. Miriam Oliveros, OP
Sr. Eleanor Cresap, OP	Sr. Mary Jean Olsovsky, OP
Sr. Heloise Cruzat, OP	Sr. Donna Pollard, OP
Sr. Adrian Dover, OP	Sr. Mary Laura Rembold, OP
Sr. Anna Marie Flusche, OP	Sr. Ceil Roeger, OP
Sr. Linda Gibler, OP	Patricia Winfree, Dominican Family

"If you want to go quickly, go alone.

If you want to go far, go together."

African Proverb

was to interact with and hear from our sisters from around the world – true Dominican solidarity in action!

This spring, our congregation continued visioning our Dominican mission and charism into the future both at our winter meeting and our convocation the first weekend in June. Many of the topics discussed in Rome overlapped with discussions we had locally at our meetings such as planning for our mission's future, responding to the changes occurring now in religious life, collaborating with others, and responding to Pope Francis' call for an integrated approach to the social and environmental crises we face. The challenges that our congregation faces are shared

by many around the world; however, we understand that without a doubt our Dominican mission will be as relevant in the next generation as it is today.

As we continue to explore and to plan for the ways in which we can minister with a lasting impact, we recognize that you are instrumental in helping us carry on our mission today and tomorrow. As the African Proverb reminds us, "If you want to go far, go together." We are blessed to have your support and are excited to share with you plans for our future and for the future of our mission and charism as they unfold. May God continue to bless you, heal you, and fill you with light.

With love and in prayer,

Donna M. Pollard, O.P.

Donna M. Pollard, OP

Prioress

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Ministry



HUMAN TRAFFICKING

January is national slavery and human trafficking prevention month. Throughout the month, organizations in the Houston Rescue and Restore Coalition, of which we are a member, host several activities to raise awareness of human trafficking and what is being done in Houston to end it.

We held a prayer service in our Villa chapel on January 11th, International Human Trafficking Awareness Day. Reflecting on Luke's Gospel, Sr. Ceil Roeger noted that as followers of Jesus we are commanded to proclaim liberty and help the oppressed go free. She preached, "We do this through education and raising awareness about human trafficking. We do this when we advocate for better supply-line laws to protect against exploitation of vulnerable persons. We do this when we advocate for better laws to protect victims and punish the traffickers and consumers. We do this by acknowledging our own role in perpetuating slavery when we become aware of how our clothes are made, where the components of our computer, cell phones, iPads etc. come from. We do this when we support the survivors and protect them from being exploited again. We do this through our prayers. We do this when we invite others to join us in our efforts to put an end to modern day slavery and human trafficking."

We also hosted a screening of "Nefarious," co-sponsored by Federation of American Women's Clubs Overseas (FAWCO) Alumni USA. The documentary exposes the disturbing trends of modern-day sex slavery and tells stories through the eyes of both the enslaved and their traffickers. Later in the month, we participated with other community partners in the Fair Trade Fiesta at A 2nd Cup coffeehouse to promote labor trafficking awareness and fair trade products.

We observed anti-human trafficking day in early February by honoring St. Josephine Bakhita, the patron saint of modern-day victims of slavery, on the vigil of her feast day with prayer and a labyrinth walk.





Kimberly Williams from CHI, St. Luke’s Health provided artwork from the Red Sand Project. She explained that the project hopes to bring greater awareness of the 40.3 million adults and children globally who are enslaved.



On World Fair Trade Day in May we hosted Fair Trade Houston, the community movement instrumental in Houston becoming a fair trade city, for a screening of “The Chocolate Case,” a documentary aimed at abolishing child slavery in the chocolate plantations of West Africa from which 60% of the world’s cocoa comes. We enjoyed chocolate at the event from Tony Chokolonly, whose vision is 100% slave free chocolate.

THE LANDING



Several months ago, we formed an ad hoc committee to investigate how we could better support our community partners in the area of human trafficking and immigration. In May, members of the committee toured the Landing, the only daytime drop-in center in Houston serving survivors of human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation. The Landing is located in southwest Houston in an area nationally known as a hotspot for prostitution and human trafficking. The drop-in center provides a safe space for men, women, and transgenders of all ages to access services and assistance on their journey of recovery.



COMMUNITY GARDEN

Many hands help to make our community garden successful, and we are grateful for them. In November, Cristo Rey students volunteered in our community garden. Freshmen students came to our garden to mulch, spread, and realign the beds. This is the fourth year in a row that Cristo Rey students have chosen our garden for their service day, and we appreciate their hard work.

On a crisp, clear morning in January, Urban Harvest honored Garland Kerr for her nearly two decades of service to Urban Harvest. Our community garden was chosen for the celebration because Garland has volunteered at the garden since 1996. Following a brief history of the garden by Sr. Heloise Cruzat, OP, Urban Harvest Executive Director, Janna Roberson, acknowledged Garland's myriad services. Two Belinda's Dream rosebushes were planted and marked in Garland's honor.



RACIAL JUSTICE

In March, we held our fourth workshop on racial justice to continue the conversation around race, specifically implicit bias and white privilege. The workshop focused on the question of what it means to be white in our society. Our facilitator, Lucy McLaughlin, gave an overview of the history of how “whiteness” developed over centuries and how this construct of whiteness is the cause of racism, harming people of color and benefiting white Americans. The history of racism, which is born out of the erroneous and immoral belief in white superiority, is rarely taught in school or discussed in the white community. To examine their racial conditioning, participants were asked to reflect on and discuss at their tables questions that focused on the racial makeup of their surroundings while growing up and today.

Through our workshops, we hope participants will continue to learn about and to reflect on racism and white supremacy. Unless the white community is willing to educate itself on these issues, we will not attain racial justice in America.





GUATEMALA

For the third year, Sr. Mary Brenda, OP and seven students from St. Agnes Academy celebrated spring break by rolling up their sleeves and volunteering at our Dominican mission school, San Vicente de Paul de Bethania, in Guatemala City. After a gracious two-day cultural immersion experience led by Sr. Miriam Oliveros, OP, St. Agnes students were greeted by the San Vicente students with great joy and enthusiasm. The children had banners, pom poms, and shouts of welcome to greet the girls. Each day the St. Agnes girls took turns bilingually teaching lessons to the middle and upper grade levels. Each lesson covered different topics such as math, world history, sports, health, and social studies. The girls' service week also involved renovating a teachers' prep office, constructing a clever wall closet and shelving with wooden crates, providing a fresh coat of paint to the pre-k children's PE and play area, and teaming up with the library staff to add reading corners to two classrooms. The greatest joy at the end of the week was seeing the San Vicente students enjoy their new and freshly painted activity areas with all the bright colors popping and children hopping everywhere! On the final day, San Vicente 5th and 6th graders successfully begged Sr. Miriam to allow the St. Agnes girls and them to go to the local park for a battle on the soccer field, something that has become a competitive and energetic yearly tradition! Each team fought hard, tumbled often, and defended their goals fiercely. At the end of the day the matches were split evenly, and all vowed to continue the tradition next year!





CATHOLIC & MUSLIM GROUP

Sr. Anna Marie Flusche, OP shared her experience with an interfaith group with which she is involved. Sr. Anna Marie reflected that at our retirement home, “it’s not often that baby carriages mingle with the wheelchairs and walkers . . . But such was the case one Saturday in February, when a group of Catholics and Muslims met at St. Dominic Villa for their monthly gathering. Two of the members had had babies in the last year, and they brought their infants to the meeting. The group consists of parishioners from All Saints Catholic Church in Houston and Muslim men and women from Turkey. They came together a couple of years ago in order to foster understanding between Christians and Muslims.

“Each month, the group meets in someone’s home. After a shared meal, they discuss a passage from the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament), the Christian Scriptures (New Testament), and the Koran. Generally, the passages are parallel in content. The degree of similarity in the texts is often striking, yielding valuable insights.” For February’s meeting, the group gathered for discussion in the Villa chapel. Members of the group expressed a feeling of awe on entering the sacred space.”

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”

The members’ reaction reminded Sr. Anna Marie of an experience she had last summer: “Two friends and I happened upon a mosque. Curious, I wanted to go in. The others were not so sure. We tried the front door, only to find it locked. We were about to leave when someone opened the door and invited us in. “I saw you in the parking lot,” he said, “and I hoped you would come in.” With pride he showed us his place of worship. Entering another’s sacred space can be uncomfortable, even daunting. But, as Mirabai Starr writes, “when we say yes to the God of Love in an unfamiliar. . . form, locks fly off the doors of the heart.”

Community



DOMINICAN FAMILY GATHERINGS

In January, the Dominican Family welcomed Sr. Mary Brenda, OP and the St. Agnes Academy students who traveled in 2018 to our Guatemala mission school, San Vicente de Paul Bethania, to learn about their service trip and more about the school. At February's gathering, the Dominican Family explored members' reactions to the clergy sex abuse crisis, the Church hierarchy's response, and the Archdiocese's release of 42 priests' names who have been credibly accused of sexual abuse over the last 70 years. Maureen Bacchi, a psychologist and consultant in Houston, facilitated the discussion. Family member turnout was high, the range of emotions broad, and the energy level palpable. Maureen did an outstanding job setting the stage and providing thought-provoking questions for productive table discussion.

In keeping with this year's theme, *Compassion in Action*, Dominican Family member Phylliss Chappell powerfully preached at the Family's March gathering. She led the group through an insightful reflection on kindness and compassion. Afterwards, members gathered at tables to share personal insights and how they might be useful during the Lenten season.



On April 28th, the Octave of Easter, the Dominican Family gathered to welcome new members at their commitment Mass and celebration. Sr. Carol Mayes, O.P. welcomed these members making their first commitment after completing two years of inquiry and formation. The celebration and our new members mark a very successful first decade of the Dominican Family in Houston.



DOMINICAN SISTERS AFIRE

Dominican Sisters throughout the United States who are 65 years of age or younger gathered in Blauvelt, New York at Dominican College over Memorial Day weekend. The group, known as the Dominican Sisters Afire, is a collaborative movement of sisters from sixteen U.S. Dominican congregations. Representing the Dominican Sisters of Houston were Linda Gibler, OP and Mary Brenda, OP. As the weekend unfolded, the sisters shared on topics relevant to their future and articulated the challenges they will face, as well as their hopes, dreams, and commitment to ministry. Especially poignant for this group were the breakout sessions where topics included exploring their unity amidst diversity, how to stand with and for others in light of their shared Dominican values and mission, and what is most compelling to them about Dominican life together in these changing times and into the future. Sr. Mary shared, “The questions were not easy, yet our shared reflections spoke volumes of thoughtful understanding, faithfulness to Dominican life, and hearts that remain on fire for holy Preaching.”

ST. PETER THE APOSTLE

On May 29th, several of our sisters shared a bittersweet evening at St. Peter the Apostle Catholic School. Following a Mass celebrated by Daniel Cardinal DiNardo, the parish community, along with current and past teachers, staff, parents, and students, gathered in the school gymnasium to commemorate the 77-year history of the school as it closed its doors at the end of the school year. All shared in a memorable evening filled with stories, reunions, and words of gratitude.

Our vicaress, Sr. Mary Jean Olsovsky, OP, accepted an award on behalf of the Dominican Sisters of Houston for service to the school. Founded by our sisters in 1942, the school remained under Dominican Sister leadership and staffing for more than 40 years. We are grateful to our many sisters who served in the St. Peter the Apostle community.





ARCHIVES VISIT

In March, Anne and Jim Crowley visited our Motherhouse and archives with the hope of finding out more about Anne's great aunt, Sr. Vincentia Lilly, OP. Sr. Vincentia was born in 1871 in Philadelphia and traveled to Galveston when she was 19 years old to join our congregation. She taught music and art and helped found the music department at St. Agnes Academy. She also helped found St. Mary Catholic School in Taylor and St. Dominic's Academy in Lampasas. Anne and Jim were curious as to why Sr. Vincentia traveled from Philly to Galveston to join religious life with so many congregations established in the northeast. They had located her grave in Calvary Cemetery in Galveston and from Houston were continuing their pilgrimage in Taylor and Lampasas to learn more about Sr. Vincentia's life.



EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION

In January, we recognized two of our Villa employees who reached significant employment anniversaries. Elizabeth Florence has served our community for 20 years as a member of our dietary staff, and Rose Conor has served for five years in our nursing department. After enjoying a celebratory lunch with them and their families, the council and others who work with Liz and Rose expressed gratitude for their presence and service in our community.



VIETNAMESE SISTERS

We hosted many joyous celebrations at the Villa over the last few months, however, at the end of December, we sadly said farewell to two of our Vietnamese sisters, Mary Oanh Ta and Mary Thao Vu. Known to all as the ‘Marys’ during the seven years they lived with us at the Villa, they learned English, completed two master’s degrees, earned certificates in Spiritual Direction, and endeared themselves to all of us. They were truly a gift to our community, especially our retired sisters, many of whom were their tutors over the years.

The Marys’ legacy lived on in January, however, when we celebrated the Lunar New Year, a tradition they began and that continues with our five Vietnamese sisters who currently reside at the Villa. This year, the sisters decorated our Villa dining room with the “Year of the Pig” theme, entertained us with traditional songs, and served a delicious Vietnamese lunch. We are so blessed to have all our Vietnamese sisters as part of our community.



Sr. Mary Pat White, OP

March 1, 1931 – April 17, 2019

Sr. Mary Pat (Sr. Simeon) was born in Houston to the late Harris and Anna Marie Durham White. She attended elementary school at Christ the King Catholic School and graduated from St. Agnes Academy in 1949. Sr. Mary Pat attended Texas State University (formerly Southwest Texas State Teacher's College) for one year before joining the Dominican Sisters of Houston in 1950. She earned her B.A. in history with a minor in education from Dominican College and her M.A. from the University of Houston. Sr. Mary Pat ministered in education for 51 years, and 40 of those years were at St. Agnes. She taught in elementary schools in Houston, Beaumont, and Nederland, Texas, and taught high school at St. Agnes and St. Pius X High School in Houston and at Monsignor Kelly High School in Beaumont. During her teaching ministry, Sr. Mary Pat primarily taught history; however, in 1970 she became the driver's education instructor at St. Agnes, which she and her young women students mutually enjoyed for 33 years! Some of her students recall that Sr. Mary Pat's foot was ever ready at the instructor's brake as they entered the freeway and her attention alert to their every move. Her love of sports, particularly softball, golf and volleyball, and her vacations with friends buoyed her already congenial nature. After retirement, Sr. Mary Pat served as driver for the congregation's retirement home, St. Dominic Villa, and worked in the congregation's archives and Guatemala mission office.



Sr. Jane Abell, OP

June 28, 1928 – April 20, 2019

Sr. Jane (Sr. James Marie) was born in Houston and attended St. Agnes Academy for three years. After her family moved to Shreveport, she graduated from St. Vincent's High School in 1945. She entered our congregation in 1948 and served for 71 years. Sr. Jane earned a B.S. from Dominican College in Houston, an M.A. in Mathematics from the University of Texas in Austin, and an M.A. in Theology from Notre Dame. She continued her extensive religious studies at Catholic University of America in Washington, DC and later learned Spanish at Our Lady of the Lake University in San Antonio.

As a secondary teacher Sr. Jane ministered at St. Agnes Academy and St. Pius X High School in Houston and at St. Paul Catholic High School in California. She then served as formation director for the community, as campus minister at the University of Houston, and as pastoral minister at Our Lady of St. John parish. In 1978, the congregation elected Sr. Jane prioress, and she served two terms. In 1987, she became Promoter of Justice and Peace and Care of Creation for the community and served in this capacity until 2010. Sr. Jane worked with immigrants and community leaders to fight against human trafficking and racism. She organized educational and experiential trips to Guatemala, made pilgrimages to El Salvador in memory of St. Oscar Romero and the four murdered church women, and accompanied refugees from El Salvador and Guatemala to find a home in Houston. Sr. Jane went to Iraq with the first delegation of Dominicans called Voices of Veritas and participated in a month of fasting, praying, and witnessing in Union Square in New York City for peace and non-violence in Iraq in 2002. A deep faith and prayer life sustained these many services as well as her great love for God and community.





Study & Prayer

ADVENT PRAYER

Our Dominican Family, sisters, and friends gathered in December for our annual Advent Morning Prayer and Brunch. Sr. Heloise Cruzat, OP preached a message of hope, drawing on Paul's letter to the Philippians, in which he writes, "Rejoice in the Lord always!" Sr. Heloise asked, "How are we to rejoice in the midst of our own challenging times? As always, Paul is clear and direct: be unselfish, dismiss anxiety, present your needs in prayer with gratitude, and await God's peace that will stand guard over your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. It is a straightforward four-step directive." Sr. Heloise noted that "when difficulties surround us and the temptation to pessimism draws so close, how important it is to recall God's personal love of us and of creation! . . . A critically important key is to believe that our individual expressions of life and love, relatedness and concern, mercy, forgiveness and joy have a power that will not be overcome. Rejoice!"



We then presented the Sr. Pauline Gannon Award to Pilar Hernandez for her countless years of service working in and managing the community's organic garden. The garden's seasonal harvests are donated to Star of Hope on Reed Road and Manna House on Blodgett Street.



LENTEN PRAYER

On Ash Wednesday and every Friday in lent, we invite all to participate in the stations of the cross in our meditation garden at the Villa. This year, in addition to the stations, we had weekly reflections on Wednesdays in our chapel. Sisters Adrian Dover, Pat Casey, Annette Dworsky, Carol Mayes, Maureen O'Connell, and Ceil Roeger gave the reflections to our community and shared them with residents in assisted living and independent living at St. Dominic Village.

On Good Friday, members of Houston's peace and justice community, our Dominican Family, and our sisters participated in the stations of the cross during Pax Christi Houston's Walk for Justice at city hall. Each year, those present proclaim the suffering and death of Jesus as clearly seen today in the suffering and death of the innocent, those condemned unjustly, those who side with the poor, those who struggle for justice, those who are victims of war, and those who die unnecessarily and violently. Participants were present to follow the way of Jesus and to be voices of hope.



WORKERS' MEMORIAL & EARTH DAY

On April 27th we, along with other national and local communities and labor and faith organizations, observed Workers' Memorial Day to remember those who have suffered injuries and died on the job, to raise awareness about dangerous working conditions, and to renew the commitment to fight for safe jobs locally. Celeste Monforten, a volunteer with the Fe y Justicia Worker Center, spoke prior to Mass. She gave the background for Workers' Memorial Day and related some of the tragic stories of persons who died on the job. The Mass was dedicated to workers who died as a result of workplace injuries and to their families. Posters with pictures of some of the men and women who died in the Houston area during 2018 were displayed outside the Villa Chapel. The display showed the diversity of the workers in age, ethnicity, and gender.

After Mass, our community and friends gathered for evening prayer and to walk the labyrinth to celebrate Earth Day. Sister Adrian gave a reflection on this year's theme, Protect Our Species, saying, "To celebrate the gift of hope and to symbolize our commitment to protecting all creation, we are encouraged to take action together. We are invited by Pope Francis to join Catholics around the world to be aware of Protecting our Species." Sr. Adrian invited all who were walking the labyrinth to "take in the beauty around us in our chapel and in our yard, to remember and rejoice that we have been given so much to enjoy in this wonderful world of ours, and to pray, as we journey, that all of us will take seriously our call from Pope Francis to hear "the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor." Following prayer, sisters carried symbols of Earth's elements of air, water, fire, and earth to the center of the labyrinth before the walk began.



SABBATICAL

Sr. Mary Laura Rembold, OP recently returned from Ireland and reported: “I had the privilege of making a ten-week sabbatical at the Dominican Farm and Ecology Centre in Wicklow Town, Ireland. I was one of 15 participants, the only one from the USA. We had a variety of cultures, traditions, and personalities, but all working together, helping and encouraging one another. The program included many profound speakers on topics of spirituality and scripture, cosmology, biology, ecology, theology, psychology, evolution, organic gardening, changing world views, and more. We also took many road trips to beautiful and inspiring woodlands and gardens for meditative walks and outdoor Mass with guides that made us more aware of God in nature. This gave us a greater appreciation of all these gifts around us. We saw ancient ruins, some as old as 5000 years. To further enrich the program, we had art classes and sacred dance. We explored dreams, had some beautiful celebrations, and so much more! I had a wonderful time, learned a lot and made dear friends.”



MARTYRS REMEMBERED

In December, we commemorated the deaths of Jean Donovan, a Maryknoll missionary, and Sisters Maura Clarke, Ita Ford, and Dorothy Kazel who were killed in El Salvador on December 2, 1980. We commemorated the lives of all the central American martyrs and disappeared. We also celebrated the canonization of St. Oscar Romero and were fortunate to have speakers who attended ceremonies in Rome and in El Salvador. Nicholas and Rose Marie Avelar, Teodoro Aguiluz, and Elmer Romero spoke about being in Rome with an estimated 70,000 El Salvadorans. Francisco Deras Soltis traveled to San Salvador to watch the ceremony at the hospital where Romero was assassinated while presiding at Mass on March 24, 1980. People throughout El Salvador kept vigil in anticipation of the canonization ceremony. Each speaker expressed how much Archbishop Romero meant to them and to the poor and oppressed in El Salvador. Francisco presented the Dominican Sisters with a relief in clay image of Saint Oscar Romero, bishop and martyr.



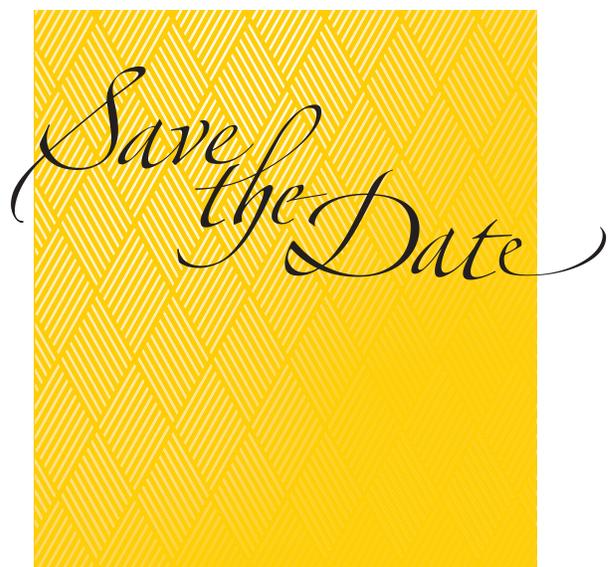
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TODAY'S KINDNESS GROWS TOMORROW'S BLESSINGS

The Dominican Sisters of Houston's legacy in Catholic education and service 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.



OCT 19TH — Workshop on Racial Justice

DOMINICAN SPIRITUALITY CENTER, 6501 ALMEDA RD.
FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL 713-440-3714

NOV 2ND — Labyrinth of Remembrance & Thanksgiving

ST. DOMINIC VILLA CHAPEL, 6504 ALMEDA RD.
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